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GUILT AND INNOCENCE.

BY

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Translated from the Swedish,

BY

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TO

MLLE. CHRISTINE NILSSON,

Whose cordial tribute to her countrywoman, MME. MARIE SOPHIE SCHWARTZ,
prepared a warm welcome for her works in America, this rendition of one of
the most charming of them is joyfully inscribed by

THE TRANSLATORS.

GUILT AND INNOCENCE.

INTRODUCTION.

"Man returns from beyond the far sea,
But not from the grave-mound."

FINNISH PROVERB.

ALREADY, in the beginning of 1780, the city of Uleåborg had increased so considerably that it could be regarded as the most important in East Bothnia. There were about three thousand inhabitants, two large squares, twenty-three streets, a spacious church built in the form of a cross, and some three hundred and fifty wooden houses, besides the town-house. The city is said to have possessed only two houses of stone, one of which was on the large square. Another noteworthy feature was that *John Messenius* lay buried in the church there. Uleåborg could pride itself upon having a beautiful and healthy situation, on the south side of Uleå River, which empties itself into the sea through a cascade called "Merekoski."

The town, built upon an isthmus, with the river on one side and Kembele Bay on the other, enclosed several hills within its area, among which one called "Pakkises Hill" was the highest and afforded a magnificent view. At the foot of this hill a "fors" gushed forth, and from this point several beautiful islands were seen. Beyond the bay the tongue of land "Hietasaari" stretched away to the beautiful cape, where many stately vessels were always to be seen. Two bridges crossed the so-called city river.

This is about the way Uleåborg looked, at the above-mentioned time.

Shortly before the war of 1788 two

weddings were celebrated in the little city. A couple of friends who from boyhood had had everything in common now wished that the same minister and the same hour should enclose them in the bonds of matrimony.

One of these was the apothecary Hederman, the other the merchant Claes Aberney. Both were men who enjoyed public esteem for their worthy character as well as for their enlightened and patriotic sentiments.

United in a friendship which began in childhood, they had constantly shared both the dark and bright moments of life.

Hederman had two sisters, Debora and Sara. The latter, youngest of the three, was yet a child when her parents died, and was adopted by a rich aunt who resided in Sweden. Debora had the charge of her brother's house until Claes Aberney carried her away as a bride.

Hederman married a young Swede, who lived with one of his relatives in the capacity of governess.

Rosa Ström had at first shown him a decided disinclination, but this did not in the least discourage Hederman. He thought, "The work begun is work half done"; and upon this ground he continued to besiege Rosa, until at last she relented and gave him a *yes*. His friend Aberney had from the first most earnestly dissuaded him from this union.

"Do you not see, dear Hederman," he used to say, "that the girl is without feeling. If you succeed in obtaining her hand, you will become decidedly unhappy. When you have given your heart, you will receive only coldness and indifference in exchange ; and this you are less able than many others to endure. Besides, you, like me, have unmingled Finnish blood in your veins, and ought not to unite yourself to any but a Finnish girl. Like children always play best together, — remember that."

Such words never have any effect when addressed to one in love. Hederman did not listen to them. He was governed entirely by his attachment, and it ended with his and Rosa's wedding being celebrated at the same time as Aberney's and Debora's.

The friendship which united the husbands of the two ladies made Debora try to approach her sister-in-law. It is true, there was no sympathy between the two women ; but Debora was good and faithful. She thought more of the use that her friendship could be to her brother's wife than of the pleasure she herself should derive from it.

Rosa was beautiful and coquettish, and entertained no affection for any one, least of all for her husband. Hederman, of a hasty and despotic disposition, was not calculated to call forth tender feelings in the heart of the selfish and capricious woman. She could not see his good qualities ; she only felt the torment of his faults and the weight of his domination.

The consequence was, that while Aberney's home was a picture of domestic happiness, Hederman's, on the contrary, presented a series of stormy scenes and violent strifes. Rosa always defied her husband's will, and could not possibly learn to begin where she must inevitably end, namely, in conforming to his wishes.

In the beginning she cried and com-

plained aloud over her misfortunes, and could not even in company conceal the resentment she felt towards a man whom she was not able to control and did not dare to resist. Debora, however, succeeded in showing her the wrong of exposing to the world what passed between them. The result of these remonstrances was, that Rosa complained only to Debora of the barbarous tyranny to which she was subjected.

Hederman felt exceedingly unhappy, becoming every year more overbearing and hasty towards a wife who did not understand him and did all she could to embitter their life together. The love he had cherished for her changed gradually into coldness and hatred, and he sought out of the house the comfort he could not find at home.

Like all selfish men, Hederman had deeply desired that his wife should present him with a son ; but in this also fate disappointed him. Six years after marriage a daughter was born to him. Aberney had then two sons, Casper and Enoch, the elder five and the younger three years old.

In the vexation over the child's being a girl, Hederman christened her *Harmen* (Indignation). The next year his wife again had a daughter. He became at this so incensed that he said, —

"This child is to me as if it had not been born. I never intend to speak to it or act as if it existed."

The little girl received from her mother the name of Edith. The Aberney family had the same year been increased by another son. Thus Aberney had three boys, while the unhappy Hederman had none.

Years elapsed. The children of the two friends grew up. Already at the birth of Harmen the parents destined her and Casper for each other, — an arrangement at that time very common. Thus the old tie of friendship and relationship should become still more strongly ce-

mented. After this understanding, Casper became Hederman's great favorite. It was decided that the boy, if he desired it, should succeed him in the apothecary business; and this conduced to make Hederman regard him with a tenderness bordering on weakness, while he treated his daughter Harmen with severity, and did not care at all for Edith. The latter was never addressed by her father, and he responded to her morning salute only with a nod of the head.

Edith was very portionless in the parental home. The mother loved her eldest child passionately; and so exclusively was she attached to her, that she had no affection left for the younger.

Hederman had, after Edith's birth, become still more severe towards his wife; and this made Rosa, in her lack of judgment, regard the child as the cause of the increase of her unhappiness, and upon this ground she nourished actual dislike to the little girl.

Treated by the father as if she did not exist, and by the mother with an unrestrained violence, it could be said that Edith's early childhood was very sad. When the father burst out in anger against the mother, Edith always had to bear the consequences of Rosa's resentment, which she did not dare to show her husband. Edith was often punished, simply because Rosa must have some one, in her turn, to tyrannize over.

Harmen was inseparable from her mother; in all pleasures and entertainments she was always with her. Edith seldom left the home. The only place she was allowed to visit was Aberney's, and this for the reason that Rosa, from respect for Debora, did not dare to show the unnatural feeling she entertained for her youngest child. If Aberney and Debora ever expressed to her their disapproval of the partiality she displayed in the treatment of the girls, her answer was, —

"Ah, my friends, you do not know how

bad Edith is. She must be brought up more strictly than her sister."

And this was really her conviction. She had got it into her head that Edith was the image of her father. Every fault of the little girl appeared to the mother as a perversity which could not be punished severely enough.

True it is that Edith was a very peculiar child; she was almost ugly, and no feature in her face gave promise that she would ever become good looking, if we except a pair of large dark eyes. Small, pale, and delicate, with hair as white as flax, a pug nose, and a marked expression of dulness and wilful defiance, she had something repulsive at the first glance. Through the severity with which she was treated she had acquired a shy look, though her whole behavior testified that she was not precisely timid. She was very disobedient and broke continually the thousand small commands that were daily given, and this in spite of the punishments which she received every time she forgot or infringed any of them.

Harmen and Edith had had the same nurse, who remained in the house after they grew up. She conceived for Edith a motherly affection, and tried in every way with prayers and persuasions to get the child to be gentle and obedient, but was always answered, —

"Mamma beats me if I am ever so good, and so I would rather be disobedient."

Neither the prayers of her nurse nor the chastisements from her mother could prevail upon her to utter the word "papa." She called her father *he* or *herr*. Aberney, on the contrary, she always called father. Aunt Aberney and Papa Aberney were ideals for Edith, and, with the exception of the nurse, they were the only ones towards whom she cared to be good and obedient.

Fru Aberney became apprised through the nurse of Edith's unhappy position in the home, and she pondered a good deal upon how she could change it, especially

as Edith was now nine years old and had not yet begun to share in her sister's instruction. All that she had learned was limited to what her nurse had taught her. Debora had often said to Rosa that she did wrong so to neglect the child; but Rosa always replied, that she desired to bring up her children without the intermeddling of others, and that Debora should not concern herself in her affairs, especially as she never remarked how Debora fulfilled her duties as a mother. Debora as well as Aberney had tried to awaken Hederman's attention to Edith's neglected condition in the home, but without success. He answered his sister, —

"My dear Debora, take care of your children, and do not meddle with mine."

To Aberney he expressed himself in these terms, —

"When I see that nothing is wanting either for her or her sister, I ought to be able to leave the rest to her mother's care. The welfare of a child cannot be in better hands than those of the mother."

That this mother cared poorly for her child, Hederman did not trouble himself to notice; and as he had become with years a very hard husband, Aberney lacked all desire to inform him how wretchedly Rosa attended to her motherly duties. He feared to make the conditions still worse between the two. Another means must be discovered by which to improve the poor child's position. Debora and her husband had just resolved to persuade Rosa and Hederman, in some way, to let them take the little girl, when chance, through a circumstance insignificant in itself, effected a complete revolution in Edith's life.

Before we give an account of it, we will say a word about Harmen.

She was as much favored by nature as Edith seemed to have been neglected. Even as a child she possessed uncommon beauty, and that natural grace in all her

movements and her whole manner which makes the child, girl, or woman who possesses it a captivating creature. With her dark curly hair, her large beaming eyes and rosy complexion, she was a lovely bud, which promised one day to become a magnificent rose. Lively, impetuous, passionate, and domineering in character, this child would have awakened many apprehensions in the mind of a judicious and sensible mother, because her whole future direction depended upon the care with which she was trained in childhood, what habits and example she then cultivated. With a weak mother, who was blind to her faults, and knew only one law, her child's will, Harmen, although endowed with a rich intellect and a heart capable of great sacrifices, could only become a willing slave to her selfish desires.

Where these might possibly lead her, as she had never learned to restrain them, was impossible to calculate beforehand; but it was easy to foresee that through them she might plunge herself and others into perdition. She had a quick comprehension and great love for study. A skilful governess from Stockholm had been engaged quite early for her instruction. She made surprising progress, and was at ten years of age a little wonder of talent. She danced like an angel, played with uncommon skill, drew charming little landscapes, embroidered the prettiest flowers in worsted, and spoke some French phrases. In short, the ten-years-old Harmen was a genius; and when papa had gone out in the evening in company with some friends, and mamma had a little tea-party, then Harmen would play something from the "Queen of Golconda," or dance a gavotte. The ladies then exclaimed in chorus, —

"O, how smart the little girl is!"

But Nature, who had been so liberal toward the pretty Harmen, had denied her one gift, namely, a voice. Harmen had a good musical ear, but could not sing a note. This deeply grieved both

her and her mother, especially as Edith, destitute of all other advantages, possessed just this one. Harmen knew of nothing which more irritated her than when Edith, in clear and beautiful tones, sang some of the melodies which she played. Edith would also wait upon her sister with a song whenever they were alone, although she knew that Harmen then ran crying to her mother, who in her turn punished Edith for her wickedness towards the gentle and inoffensive Harmen.

Every Wednesday and Sunday evening the Aberneys were at Hederman's, or *vice versa*. It was Wednesday evening and Hederman's turn to receive his friends. Debora had determined this very evening to wind about in a delicate way with Rosa relative to taking Edith, and with this intention she began to speak of the void of not having any daughter.

Hederman and Aberney played checkers. The three young Aberneys and the Misses Hederman were gathered in the so-called sitting-room, where they amused themselves playing lottery.

Casper was then a lad of fifteen, with a very ordinary appearance. Enoch, two years younger, had a lively and genial countenance. Placed between the two brothers sat Harmen, beautiful and smiling as the spring. Opposite them sat Edith and the youngest Aberney, Victor.

It was Edith's turn to draw.

"Mercy, Edith, how slow you are in calling the numbers," said Casper.

"Edith does it on purpose," replied Harmen; "she wants to plague us. See how mean she looks."

The two boys turned their eyes upon their little *vis-a-vis*, and could not deny that Harmen was right. Edith sat with her hand in the bag where the numbers lay, and looked at her sister with an irritating mien as she said, —

"Yes, you see, I draw now just as

slowly as I have a mind to, and you have got to be satisfied with it."

"Fie, how ugly you are," said Enoch, hastily; "do you not see that it torments Harmen?"

"What do I care for that?" answered Edith with a laugh, and shook the bag.

"Now draw, without any more tricks," commanded Casper. "When one is as homely as you are, she ought at least to be good."

Edith now drew up her hand and said, —

"See, here is the number; but which one? You have got to guess." She held up her closed hand, adding: "I will sing a song for you while you are waiting."

"Edith!" cried Harmen, and flew up perfectly frantic with anger; "if you sing, then I will tell mamma immediately."

"O, you will not do that while aunt is here." With these words Edith sprang to the door which led into the saloon. Before any of the other children knew what she was about she opened it, and standing on the threshold she sang with full voice a "people's song" then very popular.

The two mothers were seated on a sofa, and the gentlemen sat before one of the windows playing checkers. At the sound of the child's clear and beautiful voice, Hederman turned quickly. It was the first time he had heard it, and yet Edith was nine years old.

Rosa became pale and then purple with anger; she threw an enraged look at her daughter. The little girl, on her part, looked at her mother with a challenging expression.

Harmen hid her face in her hands and cried without restraint. Casper and Enoch tried to comfort her, while little Victor, with a malicious smile, whispered to the disconsolate Harmen, —

"That tastes like salt in sore eyes, hi, hi, hi!"

The song ceased, and the sound of a slap which Casper applied very energetically upon Victor's ear made up the final chord. Victor screamed with all his might, and now papa was obliged to find out what was the matter.

"Are you not ashamed, boys," said Aberney, "to make such a noise when you are visiting?"

"It was Casper who struck me!" exclaimed the much-abused child.

"Are you fifteen years old and yet can so forget yourself?" said Aberney, with a frowning brow.

"He behaved badly towards Harmen and made fun of her because she cried," answered Casper, a little ashamed over his loss of temper.

"Yes, papa, and I did right, for Harmen cried from envy because Edith sung," Herr Victor dared to say quite boldly.

"You must go home both of you. Such gentlemen as you cannot be out visiting when you do not know how to behave properly," declared Aberney in so decided a tone that there was clearly no appeal to be made. Aberney and Hederman resumed their places at the table, and the two young gentlemen marched home.

A singularly inharmonious condition ensued. Hederman, usually lively and impetuous in play, sat silent and thoughtful. Rosa was so deeply provoked with Edith, that she could scarcely control her anger.

In the other room Enoch tried to console Harmen and bring her to good-humor, but this was not so easy, for she complained bitterly that the boys on account of Edith's meanness had to go home, and that the whole pleasure of the evening was spoiled.

Edith had crept down upon a footstool before the fire, and looked into it with an expression of repentance. She was sorry for Victor. She was indifferent to the others. Any play was out of the

question. When they went to supper, Edith was ordered to remain. Her nurse brought this command from her mother, and stroked her hair caressingly, adding, —

"Poor little headstrong creature, you will be beaten again to-night."

"Well, what then, am I not used to it?" answered the child and smiled defiantly; "and so I will sing another song, as I cannot have my supper anyhow."

"For mercy's sake, do not do it," implored the nurse, quite frightened.

Edith did not listen to the warning, but began a new song. At the first tones the door of the saloon opened, and Hederman appeared on the threshold. With an indifferent air Edith looked at her father, and continued to sing the song to the end.

When she finished he said, "Come out, child!" This was the first time he had addressed Edith. She remained motionless.

"Do you hear what I say?" repeated he.

"Mamma has forbidden me to go out," answered the child, without changing position.

"See here, little Edith, obey now," whispered the nurse, frightened at the thought that her darling should irritate the *gentleman*; but to her great surprise Hederman went to Edith, saying in an unusually gentle voice, —

"I absolve you from the punishment your mother imposed upon you; now come."

He took hold of her arm. Edith rose, looked up astonished into her father's face, and followed him.

If Fru Rosa had been witness to an earthquake, it could not have caused her greater consternation than the sight of Edith holding her father's hand; and when she heard him say to the servant, "Why is there no place for Edith?" she was ready to sink to the ground, but preferred to take her seat in all haste at the table, so as to prevent all such catastrophes.

It was in the good old time when they sat round the table and ate their supper, instead of taking it standing as we now do.

Rosa was so agitated that she spilled the milk on the table-cloth, and committed so many blunders, that her husband finally exclaimed, quite impatiently, —

“What are you thinking of, Rosa? You have given me pepper for my mush.”

At last they separated. The Aberneys went home. Harmen kissed her father’s hand and said, —

“Good night, dear papa!”

“Good night!” answered Hederman, harshly.

Edith was silent as usual and said nothing.

“Will you not kiss your father’s hand?” asked Hederman, reaching it to her. The child obeyed the injunction in silence.

“Well, why do you not wish me a good night?”

She looked at him for a moment, as if to discover what expression his features bore; then she said, —

“Good night, papa!”

It was the first time that these words had been uttered by her, and God alone knows what moved within the little girl’s soul; but in the same moment they passed over her lips, tears streamed down her cheeks, and without saying a word to her mother, she ran out into the sitting-room, which was at the same time the children’s sleeping-apartment. There she threw herself upon her little bed and sobbed aloud, while Harmen scolded her.

“Why have I not been told that the child has a voice? You know that I am very fond of singing,” said Hederman to his dear half when they were alone.

“Because you have never wished to know anything about her,” answered

Rosa snappishly. “For the rest, a child is no wonder because she can sing.”

“That does not belong here, and I wish to be excused from all unnecessary words. You know that I cannot bear your declamations.” Hederman went into the bedroom, slamming the door after him.

“The wicked young one, what has she not managed to do,” thought Rosa, when she soon after went in to her husband. She saw that he was in a very bad humor, and therefore found it best not to irritate him further.

The next morning, before Hederman went to his store, he said to his wife, —

“Tell the children to come in!”

“What in God’s name has come over you? You have never been accustomed to trouble yourself about them!”

“Which does not hinder me from wishing to be obeyed,” answered Hederman, bruskiy.

“It is terrible, what a tone you have in your home. First, years go by in which you do not inquire after the children, and during which time you only address Harmen in a commanding tone; then you quite suddenly take the notion that you cannot go down to the shop without seeing them.”

Rosa said this with a precipitancy which made the words fly over her lips. Poor woman, who always believed that she ought to oppose her husband, who still forced her to obey his authority, after she had first called forth a matrimonial quarrel. So even now. Hederman became angry, said words both bitter and merciless, and the result was that Rosa, upon his passionate command, was obliged to call in the children.

Harmen entered with a light and dancing step, smiling, blooming, and dressed like a doll. Edith came after her slowly, with a clouded brow and a shy look, dressed in clean but extremely plain clothes, lacking all the elegance and care with which the mother’s love had adorned the handsome daughter.

Hederman's glance rested upon Edith ; he scarcely looked at Harmen. When the girls saluted him they looked with astonishment upon the father, who for the eldest had only been a severe master, and for the youngest an almost unknown personage. Hederman said to Edith, —

"I suppose you have already begun to take music-lessons?"

"No, I neither read nor play," answered the child.

Hederman's eyebrows contracted, and he then remembered that Aberney had several times brought the conversation upon the child, and reproached him for his complete indifference towards her.

"Does not Edith take part in Mademoiselle E——'s instruction?" asked he of his wife.

"Not yet," answered Rosa. "Edith is so slow of comprehension."

Hederman said nothing ; but the swollen veins in his forehead showed that he was much offended.

"You shall sing the little song for me which you sang last evening," he resumed, turning to Edith. The child seemed to hesitate a moment. The mother's eyes actually flashed fire ; but after having considered a second, Edith sang the little "Finnish People's Song." None but Hederman knew what childhood memory was in it ; we know only that when the song ceased, he patted the child's head, and said kindly, "You sing very sweetly." Then he hastily left the room and took the way to the apothecary shop. Half an hour later Victor Aberney came rushing into the shop, screaming, —

"Aunt Rosa is beating Edith so dreadfully, and that only because she has dared to sing. Come, come, else it will never go well," and the boy grasped Hederman's arm with an expression of despair and dragged him along. Reaching the saloon, they heard from the children's room stifled moans and sobs. Before

Hederman had crossed the floor, Victor had sprung forward and pulled open the door. The boy's whole appearance was distracted. With a bound he was upon Fru Hederman, who in a full blast of passion was in the act of chastising Edith with a large birch rod. Instantly the whip was wrested from her hand, and in a voice trembling with agitation and tears the boy exclaimed, —

"Now Aunt shall no longer beat the poor Edith."

In his childish anger Victor broke the rod to pieces and threw the twigs at Fru Rosa's feet, who looked at him quite stupefied. Her back was turned to the door, so that she did not observe her husband's presence before he asked, —

"Why do you beat the child?"

Edith, who had that day received more blows than usual, quite vaguely surmising that she should now find in her father a protector, answered through violent sobs, —

"I have been whipped because I can sing." She seized her father's hand, adding with childish despair, "Take me away from here. I am bad because they are so cruel towards me."

"You see yourself what a vicious child she is," shrieked Fru Hederman ; but she could not say more, for her husband interrupted her with a —

"Silence, woman, or —" He took the little daughter in his arms and went out.

"What in the world does he intend to do?" thought Rosa, who heard him cross the floor of the saloon and go down the stairs. The gate opened and swung to again. Fru Rosa sprang to the window and saw her husband cross the street to Aberney's with his daughter in his arms. When, an hour later, he returned home he was alone. Edith had been left with Aunt Debora.

The explanation that followed between the two gave Rosa to understand, in a terrible manner, that she had now for-

ever lost the affection she once possessed.

Some weeks afterwards Hederman's sister Sara came to Uleåborg on a visit. She had lost her relatives in Sweden, and therefore wished to see her brother and sister again, whom she had not met since childhood. She was unmarried and possessed a very considerable fortune.

After spending the summer in Uleåborg, she returned in the fall to Sweden, taking Edith with her, whom she had resolved to educate and make her heiress. She had said to her brother and sister, —

"You have other children and can just as well give up Edith to me. I have no one to live for, let me therefore have her."

Hederman gave his consent.

Years elapsed after these events without anything occurring worthy of note. Harmen grew up and became a charming girl, an object for Casper Aberney's admiration, and also for the young student Enoch's. When Harmen had reached her seventeenth year, her father decided that she and Casper should exchange rings.

Enoch just then finished his studies in Abo, and was soon to repair to Stockholm to enter the Superior Court of Justice.

He was to spend his summer vacations in Uleåborg with his parents. He was twenty, lively, warm-hearted, and handsome. He saw Harmen daily, and it was not to be wondered at that, in the whirl of youth, he forgot that she was destined for his brother. In short, one day when Enoch and Harmen sat in Aberney's garden, he confessed to her how deeply she was beloved, and also learned that — he was far more dear to her than Casper. Too happy then to consider the falseness they were guilty of towards the latter,

they forgot everything except that they possessed each other's hearts. It was then as always, when human beings allow themselves to be governed by the intoxication of the moment, the awakening was bitter; for reality then appears quite unmerciful, and smiles in scornful mockery at the fleeting moment's felicity.

Had not Harmen's father decided that her betrothal to Casper should take place in eight days? The remembrance of this drove the blood in a wild course through Harmen's veins, when alone at night in her room she reflected upon what had passed. The young girl's feelings were vehement and passionate. A denial was something which she had not learned to understand. It seemed to her impossible to refrain from her love for Enoch. As early as she could remember he had been her dearest friend, every good and beautiful feeling she had experienced had been awakened by him; and now, after she knew that they were both attached to each other with the same strong and warm feelings, there came a marriage made by the father and placed in the way of their future happiness. No, she would not engage herself to Casper. What did it concern her that she was loved by him, when she could only give her heart to Enoch? She decided to tell her father the following day that she could not become Casper's wife. With this resolution she went to sleep, but was troubled with unquiet and feverish dreams. It seemed to her as if some one whispered in her ears, "You have now seen the sun of your happiness go down!" The wildest and most horrible fancies tortured her the whole night, and when she awoke in the morning the nurse stood before her with a letter in her hand. The young girl experienced a peculiarly unpleasant emotion at the sight of it. She could not explain why, but she divined that it contained something distressing.

"It is dreadful, dear heart, how long

you sleep to-day," said the nurse, who now, since Edith had been taken from her, had transferred all her affection to Harmen.

"What letter have you there?" asked Harmen, and drew a deep breath. She felt herself strangely oppressed.

"O, it is of no account. Enoch Aberney told me to give it to you. He went away a couple of hours since."

"Went away!" exclaimed Harmen, and sat up hastily in bed. "Where?"

"I do not know. He only said that he should depart, and I saw Patron Aberney and him set off about seven o'clock."

Harmen reached out her hand and took the letter. She thought, "They must have gone to Uncle's country place." Now she broke the seal. The epistle was long, and Harmen's eyes flew over the lines; but the longer she read the more clouded became her brow and the paler her cheeks, and when she had finished she threw herself back upon the pillow and burst into a wild and passionate fit of weeping, while she pressed the letter together convulsively. The nurse had left the room, so that she could freely abandon herself to the first outbreak of her grief. What then was it in this letter that called it forth? It was Enoch's reason and right feeling which had now awoke.

When Harmen and Enoch had separated, the preceding evening, Casper came over to his brother and sat talking with him far into the night. Casper had spoken of his attachment for Harmen, and his hopes of felicity at her side. He had spoken with so much reliance about the future, that Enoch felt a stinging pain when he remembered what had taken place between him and Harmen.

Educated by religious and moral parents in stern ideas of honor and duty, Aberney's sons had from childhood learned to revere the *rights of others* and *their own moral obligations*. Besides, a true affection existed between the two

brothers. In short, Enoch appeared to himself as one who had betrayed Casper, and felt that he could not look him in the face. Could it be he, Casper's brother, who should destroy his happiness! a happiness which since childhood had been placed before him as the object of all his dreams!

When Casper finally left Enoch, the latter wrote to Harmen. He told her all that his honest and uncorrupted heart had experienced, and that, however much he thought of her, he would rather die than purchase an hour's happiness at the expense of his brother's peace of mind. He prayed Harmen to forget him, and to transfer her love to him who was destined to become her mate. The following morning when she received his letter, he had already left Uleåborg, and should not return until he knew that Casper and she were happy.

Fate also favored Enoch's decision; for the next morning his father had to go to Abo on business, and Enoch profited by the opportunity to go with him.

When Aberney returned, the day before Harmen's betrothal, he was alone. Enoch had travelled from Abo to Stockholm.

Pale, as if she was to be betrothed to death, was Harmen the day when she and Casper exchanged rings, — a day which was celebrated by both fathers with great jubilee, but which was regarded by the mothers with quite different eyes.

Fru Aberney, the tender-hearted mother, sighed, —

"My poor Casper, I fear that Harmen will not be a wife to make him happy."

Fru Hederman, again, thought, —

"Surely my beautiful and courted Harmen could have made a better match than to become, like me, an apothecary's wife."

Casper looked as happy as it befits a betrothed lover to be.

Victor Aberney had just become a student, and was at the betrothal ball a true cavalier, at least in his own eyes.

One year later the wedding took place. On that occasion Aunt Sara and Edith also came to Finland. The latter was now sixteen; and although by no means a beauty, she was a very pretty and lovely girl. All seemed surprised at the advantageous change she had undergone. Her father and sister received her with friendliness and cordiality, but her mother showed her complete indifference.

On the wedding-day Harmen looked so suffering, that Edith several times asked her if she was sick, but was answered in the negative. Enoch had not come to celebrate his brother's wedding. Harmen was during the ceremony so violently agitated, that she could with difficulty get the words over her lips; and in the same moment that the minister said Amen, she staggered, and fell fainting in Casper's arms. When she returned to consciousness she had a high fever and could not show herself to the guests, but was obliged to take her bed.

It was a sad ending for such a day, and it actually looked as if Harmen intended to leave this life. She was attacked by a severe inflammation. For several weeks her mother and her husband watched in the most painful anxiety for signs of her recovery.

It was a strange peculiarity, that during her whole sickness she could not bear any one at her side, except Edith; and however deeply this pained her mother and husband, they were nevertheless obliged to submit to it, because the doctor had declared that they must not oppose her wishes. Edith thus became her especial nurse.

When Harmen tossed about on her couch in physical and mental pain, it was Edith's song alone which could calm her.

After six weeks she was convalescent, and could lie dressed, but still wished no

one with her but Edith. It was as if the sister had become indispensable to the proud and capricious Harmen, after her illness, — to her who in childhood could not bear Edith, and who during the years they had been separated had scarcely ever written to her. Was Edith then her confidante? No, Harmen had no confidante and did not desire any. Although the mother loved this child to an unparalleled excess, this love had never been able to awaken the daughter's confidence. Fru Hederman's variable, partial, and intolerant character was not calculated to inspire either respect or trust. Harmen was fond of her mother, because she had been the only one who had loved her in childhood; but this affection started from pure selfishness and created no desire for the mother's advice, or any longing for a comforting word from her lips in life's bitter moments. No, Harmen had no desire to speak either of her feelings or sufferings to a mother whom she regarded as incapable of understanding her in this matter. Besides, Harmen had one of those obscure and reticent natures which resemble darkness; one never knows what they conceal, but one has always reason to fear them.

The reason why Harmen preferred Edith's company, and could get along only with her, was simply because the sister had during the last year been daily with Enoch, who resided with Aunt Sara in Stockholm. The result of this was that Edith used to talk about their cousin. She described how he spent his evenings, what pleasures and occupations he had, how good, right-minded, and uncommon he was, and so on. Harmen listened attentively to every word, as if she was afraid of losing a single one of them. She often made Edith relate the same thing over and over again, without Edith's perceiving that it was for Enoch's sake. Harmen gave her desire the appearance of wishing to know just how they lived in the capital.

Enoch had a fine voice, and all the songs that he used to sing, Edith sang also. It was a comfort for the poor Harmen to hear them. The amount of it was, that she wanted Edith absolutely to remain with her; this the father and Aunt Sara firmly refused, because Edith should return to Stockholm to finish her studies in languages and music.

When Harmen, after the lapse of two months, was again well, Edith and Aunt Sara returned to Sweden; and now she felt herself so terribly alone, that she looked with weariness into the future.

The marriage of the young pair, which began so sadly, appeared however to the superficial observer very happy. The lively and fiery Harmen had, after this sickness, entirely disappeared, and had become silent, quiet, and dreamy. She was very rarely hasty, and there was no trace left of the wilful and domineering caprices which characterized her before she was married. It was as if a cloud had spread over the sunlight of her soul. Harmen appeared, nevertheless, more charming and lovely than ever. In the large dark eyes burned a dim flame which made them still more magical; and around the pale, beautiful face waved the dark curls like silent passions, embracing the thoughtful brow of the young woman.

Married without love, but with a heart full of it for another, perverse and reserved in her character, the first years of her marriage was for Harmen only a series of endlessly tedious days. Far from placing, like her mother, an eternal opposition against the will of a husband who did not possess her heart, Harmen remained passive. She did whatever Casper asked her, never contradicting him, and manifesting as little impatience or ill feeling as tenderness or warmth.

Casper Aberney, of a calm and serious disposition, loved his wife, but had no romantic claims upon her affection. Directly after her illness, he was altogether

too happy at seeing her return to life to torment her with any questions about her remarkable change, especially as he regarded it as a consequence of the sickness. When she still continued to be silent, submissive, and mild, he found that she was much more pleasing and lovable as such than as she had been during their time of betrothal, a period in which she had continually tortured him with her whims and her quick temper. Happily for Casper, he had from childhood taken it for granted that Harmen was attached to him most of all, and that he was the object of all her thoughts and dreams, — a pleasant self-delusion which made the young apothecary believe that Harmen's apparent change was a result of her love for him. In short, the young married couple were regarded by all as being extremely happy. It was everywhere spoken of how ennobled Harmen had become, what a nice and domestic wife she was to live by preference in her home, and so seldom to visit any place of amusement.

Two years passed thus, when Edith again made a visit home. The sight of her seemed to fill Harmen with joy, and she embraced her sister with a heartiness that made a deep impression on Edith. This time Aunt Sara had not come. Edith remained at home a month, when she was to return to Sweden.

One evening before her departure, Hederman proposed that they should take a walk out through Liming's Gates towards Lötan. It was a beautiful evening in the last of June. The two sisters walked arm in arm.

Edith talked about Stockholm, and Harmen went musing at her side. Arrived at Lötan, where a great number of the city boys were seen in the field, Harmen seated herself on a little knoll which was shaded by some trees. She took off the simple summer hat and said suddenly, interrupting Edith, —

"It is now over two years since I was

married; how changed have I not become!"

"Yes, very much," replied Edith with vivacity, "but to your advantage."

"So you think." Harmen smiled bitterly. "This change, however, comes from the fact that I am now perfectly passive." She seized Edith by the arm and added with vehemence: "Say, have you any true affection for me?"

"Yes, certainly. Ever since your illness I have thought a good deal of you; but, Harmen, why do you ask such a question?"

"Because you must give me a proof of your affection. Listen to me; ever since I was sick, I have had a burning desire to go to Stockholm and there consult a physician. I am consumed by an inner suffering." She became silent and thought, "God alone knows that I now speak the truth."

"Why do you not speak of this to Casper?" asked Edith, and looked anxiously at her sister.

"He would only become uneasy, and then mamma would torment me with her everlasting questions. No, Edith, it is better that it should be as it is; and yet, if I could only go to the capital, I should certainly recover." Harmen added with an anxious, supplicating voice: "Edith, help me to get my wish gratified; it is more than my life that I ask of you at this moment!"

Edith felt troubled when she looked at her sister's agitated face; but she smiled kindly at her, declaring that she would do all that she could to fulfil her desire, if she only knew how to proceed.

"Speak to papa; Casper conforms to him in all things, and you have so much influence over papa. O Edith, Edith, how thankful I shall be!" Harmen leaned against her sister and wept.

Tears were something so unusual with Harmen, that Edith could not remember when she had last seen her cry. Moved

by this expression of grief, Edith promised to arrange it so that Harmen could go with her to the capital.

"Dear Harmen," said Edith, "you can consider it as settled that you shall go; for when I resolve upon a thing, it is sure to go through. I am not a Finnish girl for nothing."

"It is on you that all my hope is fixed; although you, like me, are not of pure Finnish blood, yet—"

"God wills what woman wills," said Edith, jestingly.

One evening towards the end of July an older gentleman and two young ladies promenaded in Djurgården.* One of these young ladies possessed a beauty so rare, that wherever she went she attracted attention, and people whispered, —

"What a beautiful face!"

When they had promenaded for a while, and the beautiful lady, with an expression of disquietude, had let her eyes searchingly follow the heaving crowd, the elderly gentleman said, —

"Now it is time to go to the Opera. There we shall certainly meet Enoch. I cannot understand why we have not seen him."

"Assessor P——'s dinner has probably lasted longer than usual," said the less handsome of the ladies, who was no other than Edith.

"Possibly," replied her escort, in whom we recognize the older Aberney. "I was just rejoicing at the anticipation of how surprised he will be to meet Harmen. When I saw him last evening as I accompanied Edith to my sister-in-law's, I did not tell either Enoch or Sara that Harmen was with us. I wanted to surprise them to-day when we should meet here."

They now took their way to the

* A magnificent public park.

theatre which they entered. They had scarcely taken their seats before a young man, with beautiful, noble, and intelligent features, came in, accompanied by an elderly lady. His eyes fell immediately upon Aberney, Edith, and Harmen. His surprise at the sight of the latter was so great, that he stopped motionless within the door, and God alone knows how long he would have remained there, had not Aunt Sara forced him to follow her to the seats reserved beside the travellers.

Harmen had immediately observed Enoch, and her emotion was still more violent than his. It was fortunate for the preservation of her secret, that Edith and Aberney were also looking at the door, and that their attention was directed to those who entered; else Edith could easily have detected the cause of Harmen's especial suffering. Now she had time to recover herself before Edith's eyes again fell upon her. Aberney saluted his sister-in-law and son, after which the turn came to Harmen. Aunt Sara smiled pleasantly, whispered some heartfelt words to her niece, and seated herself beside Aberney.

"What a pleasure it is, Harmen, to see you once more," uttered Enoch in an uncertain voice, and took his place next to her.

"It is a very long time since we met," stammered Harmen, and laid her hand in his. But after a light pressure he released it, and began with much interest to ask about Casper and the folks at home.

During two weeks' time Harmen was daily with Enoch; but not a glance nor a trembling of the voice indicated that any of the former attachment for her remained. This behavior of Enoch's called forth something changeable in Harmen's manner, which made her often

give evidence of capriciousness. Enoch was towards Harmen just as he was to Edith, and nothing gave her occasion to suppose that his feeling for her was of any other nature. It became a bitter conflict for the proud woman. When she felt fully convinced that she was no longer loved, she desired with a feverish impatience to return home, a desire which everything favored. Aberney, who had accompanied Edith and Harmen to Stockholm because he had some business to transact there, was ready to return after three weeks, and Harmen showed herself perfectly satisfied to go back with him. In short, the journey was decided upon, and but a short time remained of her visit in Stockholm.

A couple of days before the departure, Aunt Sara had persuaded her relatives to make an excursion to her little country place, where she had invited some friends.

Harmen was beautiful. The young married woman received much attention from the gentlemen who were invited. All competed to obtain from her a smile or a glance. With an exquisite tact Harmen knew how to be polite, without encouraging. Her conversation was cultivated, sometimes animated, but a heavy veil rested over her whole being, behind which one seemed to see a fire blaze; but it was not a fire which inspired any hope in these butterflies, but one which said, "Not for you."

Enoch was unusually silent and thoughtful. His eyes rested steadily upon Harmen, without her remarking it, however, for she had not once turned hers to him.

Harmen's proud heart could not endure that he should think she loved him, now that he had ceased to care for her.

The company took a walk in the garden. One of the children plucked a white rose and gave it to Harmen. She fastened it in her belt. At the same moment she happened to look up and was quite surprised to find Enoch stand-

ing before her. A dark flush spread over her cheeks, brow, and neck when she met his eyes. There was something in that look which in a flash transported her to the past, but it was a revelation which in the next second had disappeared, for Enoch immediately turned his head away and said in an indifferent voice, —

“That is a beautiful flower.”

“Yes, the white rose pleases me more than the red,” answered Harmen.

She could not gain the same command over her voice as he.

The rest of the company commenced a long discussion upon white and red roses, and when they at the same moment came to a narrow path, Enoch said, smiling to Harmen, —

“My dear sister-in-law, will you not take my arm for support?”

Harmen took the proffered arm. It was the first time he had offered her such a familiar politeness. Was it a delusion or a reality? Harmen fancied that a thrill passed through Enoch’s arm, when she laid her hand upon it. They were soon, without Harmen’s knowing precisely how, a good distance ahead of the others.

“From whence proceeds your preference for white roses?” asked Enoch.

“God knows, I have never been able to account for it.”

“Then I am more fortunate, for I know why they please me.”

“Let me hear it! I am curious to know it.”

“I never see a white rose without imagining that it is the image of woman’s heart. It must be in thought and feeling as pure as the leaves of the rose. I also consider the man contemptible who so poorly understands what conscience dictates, that he exposes the woman he holds dear to temptations which could cast the smallest shadow upon her purity of soul.”

“But, Enoch, man’s reason cannot always stand as a watchman over his

feelings, and therefore it is best not to be severe when we judge others.”

“With man as with woman, honor and duty ought to govern, else he is to be despised.”

“Take care; fate can so revenge, that you yourself may give way to your feelings.”

“No, Harmen, that can never happen.”

A long pause followed. Harmen then spoke of indifferent things; but her cheeks were as white as the leaves of the rose in her belt.

When they all returned to the house, they had some music. Edith sang, and in such a manner that she transported all. Harmen sat leaning back in a fauteuil in a cabinet adjoining the saloon. She did not hear the song, being so engrossed by thoughts of Enoch, and how she should be assured as to his look whether it was really a reflection of his feelings or only an illusion.

Enoch stood directly before the door of the cabinet, with his back turned to Harmen, and seemingly entirely absorbed in the song. When it ended he turned round; at the same moment Harmen rose to go out into the saloon. At this movement the white rose dropped from her belt. Feigning not to see Enoch, she passed by him and went to one of the open glass doors, where she stood conversing with Edith. Where she now was she could see into the cabinet, and perceived very well that Enoch went in there some moments after she left. Concealed by the curtains before the glass door, she turned her head and threw a look after him. She saw Enoch with a hasty motion pick up the flower, carry it to his lips, and hide it in his breast.

“Now I can die happy,” thought Harmen, in the excess of her feelings. “I know that he still loves me.”

The remainder of the evening she was the very embodiment of felicity. She jested and smiled, but without address-

ing her words to Enoch. His brow, on the contrary, grew more and more cloudy, and during the journey home he was so gloomy, that even Aberney and Edith remarked it.

The following morning the event with the flower was not enough for Harmen's heart. She asked for one thing more, and that was the assurance whether she was loved or not. She had only two days before her departure, and she found it impossible to leave Stockholm before Enoch's words had confirmed what the look and the action with the flower had given her to understand. She was governed the whole day by a feverish anxiety, which became extremely painful when Enoch did not appear. Aberney was away; Edith had gone out with some acquaintances. Harmen had declared that she felt ill and was not able to go with them. Aunt Sara was very busy with preparations for their journey, so that Harmen did not see her at all.

Towards evening Enoch came home and found Harmen alone in the parlor. Without seeming in the least affected by it, he began to speak of how much engaged he had been, and then the conversation passed over to other subjects. Enoch spoke of home, and how much he longed to see his brothers and mother again. His unembarrassed manner had an influence upon Harmen, so that she again became at ease.

"Do you not intend to come to Finland next summer?" asked she.

"Yes, most assuredly. I have not dared the experiment before," added he, with a melancholy smile.

"And why not?"

"Because I distrusted my own strength and perhaps also another's. I should have been very unhappy if I had awakened in her a weakness which would have been prejudicial to the duties she had taken upon herself." Enoch seemed agitated. Harmen again appeared perfectly calm.

"Such a fear, dear Enoch, appears to me inexplicable. Did you not believe that *she* knew a wife's duty?"

"Harmen, hear me," exclaimed Enoch, with vivacity. "When they wrote me that you were taken ill on the wedding-day, the bitter thought arose in my mind, that — that —"

"That it was a sudden indisposition," interrupted Harmen, coldly. "There was no reason to attach such great importance to that, and to my childhood's fancy."

"Childhood's fancy," repeated Enoch, seriously. "I know full well that my feeling for you was of a deeper nature."

"If you speak of our friendship, then I hope it will always remain that of a brother and sister," replied Harmen, with a friendly smile; "but those follies which made you leave Uleåborg ought not to have kept you from visiting us, for on the whole we could laugh at them." She reached him her hand. Enoch took it.

"Harmen, you are a grand and noble woman, such as you have always stood before my imagination, and as I love to remember you. Thanks, a thousand thanks, my first and only love, that I again find you to be such!" He kissed her hand. A shiver went through Harmen's whole being, and she closed her eyes to preserve her outer calmness.

"For my sake, you shall no longer fly from your home and your relatives."

"Not for your sake, but —"

"Not any buts; for your brother's wife cannot possibly be dangerous to your peace." Harmen smiled so sisterly at Enoch. "Let us forget the past and remain good relatives and friends."

"You are happy, you —"

"Yes, I am very happy," assured Harmen.

"Harmen, let us no longer continue this conversation. I have through it learned to know the whole of my weak-

ness. In this moment I wish that I had never seen you again."

He rose and went up and down the room several times. Harmen leaned against the sofa and thought, —

"I would willingly give my life to be allowed to say how deeply, how exclusively I love him; but a single word which indicated what my heart feels would forever rob me of his esteem and at the same time of his love." She pressed her hand hard against her breast and sighed. At this sound Enoch stopped.

"You sigh, Harmen," said he. "Is it possible that you also —"

"Long for my home and my husband, yes." Harmen's eyes rested searchingly on Enoch. She saw him change color, and added: "I cannot without anxiety think how Casper must miss me."

"He loves you still as deeply as ever?"

"Yes, he surely does."

"And how could it well be otherwise? You do not belong to those whom one can forget. Ah, Harmen, you will never understand how I have loved you and shall love you until my death."

A pause ensued. Harmen had not strength to reply. Aunt Sara's arrival broke off all further conversation.

Two days later Harmen had left Stockholm.

Casper greeted his wife with a glad and hearty welcome, which ought to have made an agreeable impression upon Harmen, to see that she was still so much loved by her husband; but she became indifferent, and did not seek in his affection a solace and a recompense for what duty bade her forsake. The young woman had not yet learned that there is a comfort in this life for all that we suffer and sacrifice, namely, *that of duties fulfilled*. Harmen cast away all that could mitigate her inward sorrow, and found enjoyment in revelling in her

grief. It was her body, not her soul, that returned home.

Uninterested in the outer world, she received with perfect indifference the intelligence that her husband had taken a youth, a foreigner, a German as it was said, to his house. Board was paid for the young Ivano at Casper's, so that he could in the mean time employ himself in the laboratory. He intended to become a chemist.

Absorbed in a feeling of immeasurable regret and disgust with all that surrounded her, Harmen paid very little attention to the young lad, and seldom or never addressed him, although Casper often entreated her to do so. When her husband thus reminded her, she would sometimes say a few words to the youth, as he came in to his meals, or spent a part of the evening with the family; otherwise she was as if he had not existed.

Ivano, on his part, could not drop Harmen from sight from the moment he entered the room until he left it. She was too beautiful not to become an object of the admiration of the youth, who was of equal age with her.

Some weeks after Harmen's return an event occurred which drew her somewhat from the indifferent state into which she was plunged. Debora Aberney died after a short illness, leaving her husband and sons in the deepest sorrow. Harmen mourned for the departed, because she knew how deeply the loss of the beloved mother would affect Enoch, especially as he had not seen her for three years, and could now nevermore view those features so dear from childhood.

One year had rolled over Debora's grave, when Fru Hederman followed her sister-in-law to the tomb. Harmen, after her mother's death, was more silent and reserved, without Casper's observing it. He was one of those men who consider it silly to be continually occupying themselves with their wives; especially as there was a certain something in Har-

men's continually passive and unresisting manner which became exceedingly monotonous, and made him very often find his beautiful wife tedious. To all that he said she always replied affirmatively, and never entered into any discussion. This gave Casper occasion to say to his friends, —

"My wife is so in love that, for fear of displeasing me, she never has any other opinion than mine."

Poor Casper, how blind he was when he could not see in Harmen's whole demeanor an obvious weariness of life, an absolute indifference for everything! Had Harmen possessed a friend, some confidante to whom she could have spoken of her feelings and her sufferings, then the direction of her soul would perhaps not have taken so fearful a character as was now the case.

One day Casper had come from the apothecary shop, bringing with him a flask which he put in a case in his room where he kept drugs. He then said, —

"Our life is a very frail thing; a few drops of this liquid, and the lamp of life is instantly extinguished."

"Is it poison?" asked Harmen.

"Yes, and besides, one which kills directly."

Casper locked the case and put the key in his table drawer. When he had left the room, Harmen took the key and opened the case. She took down the bottle and looked at it, while she in thought repeated her husband's words, —

"A few drops of this, and the lamp of life is extinguished; and I could thus deliver myself from an existence which seems unendurable. Who would regret me? No one. Some weeks after my death I should be forgotten. I have no children, and consequently no ties which bind me to life."

She brought her hand to the glass stopper which was bound over, but just then a servant came in. Harmen put the bottle away hastily, and shut the

door of the case. It was not done quickly enough, however, for the girl caught her motion.

"Patron Aberney wishes to speak to you," said the servant, and threw a curious look around the room. "Well, what can my mistress have to do with those bottles," thought she. "Herr Aberney has so expressly forbidden any one to touch them."

Harmen received some commissions from her father-in-law, which obliged her to go down town, and through which the whole day was taken up. In the evening the two old friends were together in the saloon, smoking their pipes. Harmen had had some household matters which kept her in the kitchen. As she was about entering the saloon she heard Aberney say, —

"You see, Hederman, that I did right from the beginning when I tried to dissuade you from marrying Rosa; but you were obstinate."

"And I had to suffer for it. My marriage was so unhappy that many times since I have been a widower I have thanked God for delivering me from the heavy yoke."

"I, on the other hand, shall never cease to regret Debora," sighed Aberney.

"That is natural; for where there is mutual love, there is also true happiness; but where that is lacking, death is the only deliverer one can hope for."

Harmen stood motionless a long time without hearing anything further of the conversation. She repeated, —

"Where love is lacking, death is the only deliverer that remains. Best then to die!" These last words she had, without knowing it, uttered almost aloud.

"Not at all," answered a friendly voice, and she felt a pair of arms seize her around the waist. It was Victor, who had arrived from Abo, to pass some weeks at home. He was preparing to graduate.

From that day Harmen became restless and uneven in her manner. It was

as if some hard struggle was going on within her.

Victor soon discovered that Harmen suffered from some grief; but was this then so wonderful? Had she not, in the course of a year and a half, lost her mother and mother-in-law? With Victor, however, the suspicion arose that Harmen did not love her husband, but was consumed by a secret attachment.

One day, six weeks after Victor's return to Uleåborg, Aberney and Victor sat at the dinner-table at Hederman's, when one of Casper's servants came rushing in, crying, —

"Herr Aberney has fallen dead from his chair, after drinking a glass of wine."

The two old men and Victor hurried across the street and up to Casper's rooms. They found him lying on his back on the floor, and Harmen, more like a statue than a living creature, leaning over him.

Physicians were called, and at the examination of the dead it was declared that Casper Aberney had died from the effects of an instantly fatal poison. The remainder of the wine and the food left from dinner were examined, but were found not to contain anything of the kind. The glass which Casper had drank from lay broken beside him.

A thorough search now followed, with the result, that among the drugs which Casper kept it was seen that a bottle containing prussic acid had been opened. A servant told that she had one day seen Fru Aberney put just that bottle back in the case. As no persons besides the servant and Harmen had been in the room during dinner-time, and as the latter had poured the wine from which Casper died, an examination was instituted, at which suspicion plainly fell upon Harmen of having poisoned her husband; a suspicion, however, from which the general voice fully acquitted her. Was it not known that the married pair had lived very happily together? But

another circumstance caused her to be strongly suspected, and that was, that upon the handkerchief which she had used that day some prussic acid had been spilled. The process of the investigation had an exciting effect upon all. Harmen, however, displayed through it a calmness and a dignity which impressed even the judge.

Scarcely was the trial commenced before Enoch suddenly appeared in Uleåborg, after an absence of five years. He had been apprised by letter of his brother's terrible death and the shadow of suspicion which fell upon Harmen, and had hastened home to assist her in his capacity of advocate.

The meeting between them was painful in the highest degree. Harmen's whole exterior showed how ravaged her soul was by this bitter suffering that had befallen her. She had become so pale and so wasted, that she appeared like a shadow of her former self. She was very much agitated during their first conversation; but at the next she was, on the contrary, perfectly composed. They then spoke of all that had transpired upon the day that Casper died. With perfect clearness Harmen described everything, from the least to the greatest. Enoch took it down; then he spoke with both his own and Harmen's father, who testified that from the beginning to the end of her marriage she had been in every respect a good wife, a testimony which was also given her by all the household. The servants had never heard any altercation between them; Harmen had always been compliant and friendly towards her husband; but all agreed that she was very silent and low-spirited.

After all these questions, and the most persevering interrogation of the boys and dispensers at the store, Ivano remembered that the same forenoon Casper died he had been in the room of the departed and had then seen a wineglass on the

table. Casper had held a black bottle in his hand while he spoke with Ivano. This information gave occasion for new researches as to where the glass which Casper drank out of had been taken from. The housekeeper declared that she had taken it from the sideboard, but when Enoch asked if she had not that day carried any glass from Casper's room, it was admitted that she had placed such a one on the sideboard, which had stood upon her master's table, because it looked perfectly clean. Now the matter seemed clear. Casper had used the glass and poured prussic acid in it; the girl had afterwards put it by his place at table, and thus he had been poisoned.

In the afternoon, when this information had been given at that day's examination, and Harmen had been almost entirely exonerated from suspicion, she sat alone in her home when Ivano came in.

"Excuse me, Madame," said he in French, "for disturbing you; but I come to bid you adieu. A letter from my guardian calls me immediately to St. Petersburg."

Harmen replied in some general terms. When she ceased, Ivano took a chair and seated himself beside her.

"You expect that I shall now take my departure; but before I leave this house, in which I have received so much hospitality from your deceased husband, and so much cold politeness from you, I have a few words to say. You are an uncommonly beautiful woman; one cannot see you without admiring in you one of the Creator's masterpieces. I am young, and no wonder then that your beauty has made on me a deep impression; yet that is now over. At your husband's death you ceased to be beautiful in my eyes," added he with emphasis. "You had for a long time been an object of my warmest feelings. Your whole being was calculated to awaken in a youth's breast dreams which till then had slumbered. That I

have in silence adored and admired you has made me to-day render a declaration before the court which gives your husband's death the appearance of an accident, and frees you from all suspicion; but, Madame, it was not for your sake, but for—my own. I did not wish that name branded by a terrible suspicion, which I had once revered and loved, although my feelings are now the reverse of what they were."

"I do not understand you," said Harmen, haughtily, and looked darkly at Ivano. "If what you have related before my brother-in-law and the jury is not true, who has asked you to appear with a false story?"

"My former weakness for you has made me do it."

Ivano rose and whispered some words in Harmen's ear. The young widow's pale face became paler still. She stared at Ivano, who added, while he bowed: "The grave and I are equally silent. Farewell!"

He hastened from the room, and Harmen leaned, shivering, against the sofa.

Somewhat later in the afternoon the post arrived, bringing with it two pieces of unfortunate intelligence, one private, the other public.

The latter contained an order to Finnish regiments to place themselves as quickly as possible upon a war footing; the other was from Aunt Sara. She communicated to Hederman, in terms of the deepest despair, that his daughter Edith had disappeared, and according to a letter which she left behind her to Aunt Sara, had gone with a Russian to St. Petersburg.

These two Job's communications affected Hederman so violently that he died in a few days of paralysis.

His decease, the investigation concerning Casper's death, and Edith's flight, were all events which were forgotten in the general anxiety occasioned by the thought of the war which stood at Finland's door. Public attention was so

exclusively directed to it, that all private events were left aside.

In February, 1808, the Russian troops, under the command of General Buxhövdén, crossed the frontier. Upon the ground of the Russian proclamation, it was hoped that the opened hostilities would have a happy issue; but alas! Gustavus Adolphus IV. was too stubborn to calculate his force with wisdom, and the consequence was he cast aside all reasonable advice and warnings, placed the welfare of the country at stake, and opened its gates to all the devastations of war.

Finland, which for some time had been allowed to recruit after the innumerable wars which had swept over it, saw with a hopeful heart the general well-being begin to flourish upon the soil which had drank the blood of so many of its sons.

At the outbreak of the war of 1808, Finland was prospering in both a material and intellectual respect. Its population had annually increased considerably, and with this the products of the country were also more abundant. It had also advanced in scientific culture, and the Abo University* ranked with the Swedish. In silence a line of men was formed whose names shall forever be an honor to their century. Names such as Parthan, Calonius, Menander, Tengström, Gadolin, and Hällström shall be preserved with distinguished honor in the history of learning, and bear witness of vigor and perseverance, — qualities that have an effect even upon intellectual superiority, making it more fruitful. Proud of her country and her sons, Finland dreamed of a continued progress, when the storms of war came to prove the instability of fortune.

O Finland! What Swede can think of the 17th of September, 1809, without pain? It was then that peace was proclaimed between Sweden and Russia, — a

* Now the University of Finland is at the Capital, Helsingfors.

peace which tore thee from the Swedish mother heart, that shall never cease to mourn, the loss of this child, of which she has been so proud. Faithful and strong as the rock, thou hast for centuries braved the ravages of war, fought and conquered for thy freedom with a courage and self-denial which renders thy people one of the most remarkable. This the last war, so unhappy for Sweden, best proves. Adolf Ivar Arvidson has the following with reference to it: —

“Thus ended this campaign, which always was to the Finnish soldier so rich in glory, although not always successful. Almost without support from Sweden, the Finnish army sustained a very unequal conflict against a superior enemy, having at times a surprising success and gaining on the whole more victories than in the preceding wars, even in conjunction with the combined forces of Sweden. It could be foreseen, from the great disproportion in the strength of the two armies, that the little Finnish force would finally succumb; but as there are *victories without honor*, so there are *defeats which insure an immortal fame*; and such were those of the Finnish army. At the recollection of all the heroism which the war of 1808 presents, one feels tempted to curse the traitor who dared to betray such a people.”

SIX YEARS LATER.

In a smiling region in the middle of Sweden lies Särnäs, the remarkably beautiful abode of the Superior Judge. A new judge and his wife had now occupied it for a year.

Enoch Aberney was very young for the office he occupied; but he had obtained this rapid promotion through his uncommon knowledge and his great

* It will be remembered that the strong fort of Sveaborg was given up to the Russians by a foreign traitor.

ability and integrity, — all qualities which more or less distinguish the educated *Finn*. For two years he had been married to his brother's widow, Harmen. They had spent the first year of their marriage in Stockholm, after which Enoch obtained the jurisdiction and established himself at Särnäs.

Harmen had thus become the wife of Enoch, he whom she had loved so exclusively from childhood. Enoch now possessed as his wife this woman, who united in her person all the high and noble attributes that he adored in the sex. These two were thus very happy? Yes, Enoch was so truly; but how Harmen felt it was difficult to decide. When she had Enoch at her side she forgot everything in the joy of the moment; but it was not that fresh, smiling, and peaceful form of deep felicity which an inward satisfaction generates, but was something unquiet and feverish, over which a veil of sorrow lay spread. The rosy joy of love was enveloped in clouds or disturbed by uneasy and silent dreams. A shadow was thrown over Harmen's inner world which never left it.

"*Memory* is that which torments me," she used to answer Enoch, when he asked her with tenderness why the cloud continually lingered on her pale brow.

Enoch loved her doubly in these moments. She would not have been his sensitive Harmen, could the present happiness have made her lightly forget the dark forms of the past.

Two years after marriage Harmen became a mother, and the dark shadows now seemed almost blown away. She appeared actually happy, and Enoch's felicity was complete. Life smiled upon him full of promise, when an incident from without came and drove away his happiness.

At the second autumn after Enoch entered upon his administration, a terrible case of criminality occurred. A peasant woman was accused of having pois-

oned her husband. The first day of the trial, when Enoch came from the court, he was pale, and for the first time during three years of marriage there was an expression of darkness upon his face. Harmen asked him what it was, and he replied, —

"Ah, my beloved Harmen, it sometimes seems very painful to be a judge, for then we see humanity in its deepest degradation. The sight of crime always disturbs our inner peace."

At dinner Enoch was silent, and his look rested on Harmen with a painful expression. One of the notaries said during the meal, —

"Have you heard, Madam, what a horrible case we have had before us to-day?"

"No," replied Harmen; "but from Aberney's gloomy countenance I conclude that it must have been something unusual."

"It is a quite young peasant woman, who has been accused of taking her husband's life with poison," answered the notary.

Harmen grew pale, and a shiver passed through her whole frame. At the same time she looked at her husband. He was looking at her with an uneasy and searching glance.

"Strange," said Enoch, contemplating his wife; "I shall undoubtedly have to condemn the poor woman to death, and yet it may be possible that she is innocent."

"Impossible, Judge," returned the notary; "there are too many proofs against her."

"Nothing is impossible," replied Enoch, and rose from the table. When he kissed Harmen he took her head between his hands and looked deep into her eyes; then he whispered in an agitated voice, —

"Poor child!"

Harmen spent the time that Enoch was at court shut up in her room, alleging that she suffered from headache. In the evening when Enoch came to her,

her eyes bore traces of tears, and one could see plainly that she had been weeping very much. Enoch was now friendly, cordial, and glad as usual. He talked cheerfully and caressed Harmen; but when he drew her to him and called her by the tenderest of names, she again began to weep.

The next day Harmen appeared calm, though a certain melancholy rested upon her countenance. The trial of the accused peasant woman continued the whole forenoon, and Enoch at dinner was again thoughtful. The suit with the criminal woman made the cloud darker and darker on Enoch's brow. He was kind to Harmen, sometimes passionately tender, but there were but few words exchanged between them. It was as if he had avoided speaking with her. The last court day, before he went to pronounce the sentence over the murderess, he came in to Harmen. She sat by the cradle of the sleeping child. Enoch regarded both a long time; then he kissed Harmen upon the brow, saying mildly, —

"She only who has been unhappy, but not guilty, can dare to enjoy the delight of being a mother. Is it not true, my beloved?" Without waiting for her answer, he kissed her, adding, "At noon the case is ended, and then, Harmen, you shall meet me with a beautiful smile on your lips, so that I may forget all that has troubled me. We will dine alone. All those engaged in the suit are invited to the pastor's, but I have declined the invitation."

When Harmen was alone, she sank down on her knees by the cradle of her child, and faltered through violent sobs, —

"Only she who is not guilty can dare to enjoy the delight of being a mother! O Jesus Christ, have mercy upon my innocent child!"

Harmen arranged an almost festive dinner. The elegant table stood spread in the middle of the floor. With a smile, behind which she concealed all the pain

which dwelt in her soul, she went to meet Enoch when he entered, and reached him her lips to kiss. Enoch remained standing right before the door. His glance fell on the table, on which a wine-bottle stood; and as if this sight had called forth some terrible recollection, he passed his hand over his brow and drew a deep sigh. When he afterwards turned his face to Harmen, it was stern, but softened when he met her loving look. They seated themselves. Harmen did her best to be lovely.

Chance, that inexplicable and secret power, would have it that they should have poultry that day, a dish that Harmen did not like to see on her table, because it was the last that Casper ate before he drained the fatal glass of wine. When Enoch had eaten his portion, Harmen took the wine-bottle and filled a glass for him, but without taking any herself.

"Do you not drink wine?" asked Enoch, in a tone utterly unlike the one in which he was accustomed to address her.

"No, Enoch, you know that I am never in the habit of doing it," replied Harmen.

"Yes, that is true, you never drink wine; you only present it to your husband."

The voice was harsh. He took the glass, adding, —

"Six years ago, just this very day, you filled a glass of wine for your first husband."

Enoch poured out the wine slowly, almost drop by drop into his plate, continuing in a smothered voice, —

"I will see if there is not also some poison at the bottom of this."

His penetrating look was fixed upon his wife's deadly pale countenance. When he uttered the last words, Harmen started up and exclaimed in despair, —

"Pardon, mercy!"

She threw herself upon her knees before Enoch, and would have seized his hand. He drew it away and supported

his head with it, all the while fixedly regarding the kneeling woman.

"In the husband's cabinet was a case; this case contained bottles of poison. One day, just the same day as this, six years ago, his wife went into this room, she took a black bottle and stole out into the dining-room where the table was set. In her husband's glass she poured a few drops of the colorless liquid, after which she returned the bottle to its place, having wiped it with her handkerchief. Some moments later she meets her husband with the sweetest of smiles. She serves him with the dishes he most likes, and finally she presents him with a glass of wine, and asks him to drink. He drinks" (Enoch grasped her arm with convulsive eagerness) "and after having emptied this glass, which she with such perfidious friendliness offered him, he falls dead at her feet."

Enoch rose and literally pulled Harmen up from her kneeling position, crying,—

"Unfortunate, you deceived me, you were not innocent, you have murdered my brother, and I—" He flung her far from him, ran his hands through his hair, and exclaimed in a tone of despair, "and I, I have married my brother's murderess!"

Harmen sank down upon her knees. She was not able to stand, but dragged herself to her husband's feet, sobbing,—

"Hear me, before you curse!"

"Follow me!" was all that he answered, and went into his office, bolting the door after them.

The following morning there came a message to the parsonage with the horrible intelligence, that Judge Enoch Aberney had shot himself in the night, and that his lovely wife had become deranged through grief.

PART I.

In the folds of its mantle Time had brought with it ten years. Ten winters had snowed over Enoch Aberney's grave, and for sixteen years had Sweden mourned the loss of Finland; it looked still with pain and regret after the lost one, and from Finland's faithful heart was sent many a sigh to the Swedish shores.

One would have sought in vain in Uleåborg for any of Hederman's and Aberney's descendants. The apothecary shop was in possession of a stranger, and Aberney's house had been a prey to the flames. Of Aberney's three hopeful sons only the youngest, Victor, remained, and he no longer resided in his native town.

What had become of Hederman's two daughters? No one knew.

Victor Aberney had become a professor

in the University at Abo, where he resided. He never visited Uleåborg.

The spring term of 1825 in Abo was ended. Professors and students went away to enjoy the summer and recruit themselves after well-sustained fatigue. Professor Aberney was one of those who left the city. He removed to a little country place which he had just purchased, and which was located some miles from Abo. It had a solitary situation. The Professor intended to spend the summer there, accompanied only by Aunt Sara, who took care of his house. Aberney was a bachelor. He had passed the previous summers in a little place that he rented; but as he could not enjoy undisturbed peace there, he had gone farther away.

Victor Aberney's occupation during his stay in Junta was to plunge into his studies and his musical meditations. On these summer trips he took with him a whole library and some music, and loved to spend the days either lying outstretched in the woods reading some of his favorite authors, or in roaming around the neighborhood with a book for a companion; or he could forget the whole outer world with his violin or at his piano, holding solitude dear, and never voluntarily seeking any other companionship than nature, his books, and music. At this period he had not yet completed his fortieth year. He was tall and strongly built; he had a free and open brow, upon which intellectual and moral superiority was enthroned, and a marked expression of firmness of character in every feature. He had the appearance of a genuine Finn, upright, sensible, and determined. For the rest he was a thoroughly learned man, who had never loved anything but his books, a gifted composer who had never been enthusiastic over anything but music, and a man of integrity who wished to live for his country.

He withdrew as much as possible from social life, but when he participated in it, it was not as a half-foolish, abstracted book-worm, whose manner excited ridicule, but as a cultivated and agreeable man of society.

It was towards the end of May, one week after Aberney's arrival at Junta. With some books under his arm, the Professor started for one of his favorite places in the wood. He had scarcely had time to stretch himself upon the tender carpet of grass, when a voice cried, —

"Victor, Victor!"

"Well, there comes Aunt Sara. What can the old lady want of me?" thought the Professor, and looked quite provoked. At the same instant the figure of a woman appeared among the trees. It was a little, thin woman, attired with

great care and nicety, without there being anything "set off" in her apparel. The cap of exceedingly fine and beautiful lace was plain, neat, and dazzlingly white. The face which it surrounded had quite certainly been beautiful some thirty or forty years back. Now it was small and shrunken. The features were fine and regular. The deep-set brown eyes were extremely lively, and had a mixed expression of sharpness and friendliness. Her whole person bore the stamp of an unceasing activity. When with a light and rapid step she had come up to Aberney, she said in a short, quick voice, —

"Dear Victor, it is not right of you to run away from me; you ought to have known me well enough to understand that I should find you, as I had made up my mind to have a talk with you."

Aunt Sara spread her handkerchief upon the ground, smoothed her dress, and seated herself at a little distance from Victor.

"It is no easy matter to get away from me, I can tell you," added Sara, with a self-satisfied manner.

"So I perceive," sighed Victor, and closed his book, adding: "well, why do you pursue me so obstinately?"

"O, that you know very well!" said Sara, and very carefully smoothed out a crease in her apron. "Had you not surmised what it was, you would not have run away so soon."

"Dear Aunt, if it is to read me that letter, then," — Victor's brows contracted, — "then I assure you that it is not worth while. I ask you quite obligingly to refrain from speaking to me about that matter."

"After this warning you have soothed your conscience for what may come to pass between you and me in the case we should happen to take each other by the hair. But I will inform you that Aunt Sara is not much afraid for herself, and therefore —"

She drew a letter from her pocket. Victor was instantly on his feet.

"Therefore there is an end of my patience," exclaimed he. "I assure you, Aunt Sara, that I will not come home to dinner if a word more is said upon this subject."

With this Victor took a few long and hasty steps, so that he made quite a distance from Aunt Sara. She remained sitting and looked after him. When she had lost him from sight, she muttered, —

"Run away, my boy, but it is of no use, or do you believe that your old aunt is such a simpleton that she cannot vindicate the right because you take to flight. We will see. As sure as a man ought to stand by his word and an ox by his plough, so sure is it that when a woman wants anything it will go through, were there even ten men to cross her. Now I want you to take the boy, because it is right and reasonable, and it shall be done."

With this hopeful premise, Aunt Sara rose and tripped up to the house. She seated herself on the front stoop with her sewing, and threw a glance now and then at the men to see that they were working. They were busy arranging flower-beds.

Towards dinner-time Aberney came home. When he saw Aunt Sara sitting in the porch, he stopped at the gate, as though undecided whether he ought to go in; but when she continued to sew without heeding him, Aberney took his choice and continued his way. When he stepped upon the stoop he said, —

"Good day, dear Aunt; is dinner ready soon?"

"Dinner!" exclaimed Sara. "Did you not say that you should not come home to dinner?"

"Hm!" Aberney said nothing more, but went into the hall. Aunt Sara remained and sewed quite desperately. Victor walked back and forth upon the floor. After a while he came out to Sara.

"I desire something to eat."

"O yes, you desire to have your food, and I must stand ready to serve your wishes; but when I have something to talk with you about, then you run away and say you would rather go without your dinner than to listen to me. I declare if it is not —"

"See here, dear Aunt, do not be angry. You know there is but one subject that I never want to hear spoken of."

"And so you believe that I shall be mute. You think I shall allow myself to be commanded to silence." Aunt Sara was real angry.

"I think that you should be good and give me some dinner," returned Victor, laughing.

Aunt Sara rose, grumbling a little, and went into the kitchen.

"Now I can be sure to be treated with hash," thought Victor, and seated himself upon the porch. In a little while Aunt Sara's voice was heard, —

"Now you can go in and eat."

Victor went into the dining-room. The table was set only for one.

"Well, what does this mean? Do you not dine with me, Aunt?"

"No, I am not hungry."

Sara cleared out to the kitchen, and Victor seated himself, muttering, —

"The old lady is angry. It is dreadful with women, that they should be so cross."

The Professor lifted one of the covers, fully persuaded that it contained hash, to which he was by no means partial, but he was mistaken. It was steak. When the dinner was eaten with a vigorous appetite, the Professor went out on the steps to smoke his pipe, and pet his large hunting dog. Aunt Sara did not become visible, but a servant brought in the coffee. Aberney was so accustomed to listen to Sara's chat for a while after dinner, that it seemed to him quite lonesome. He soon fell into thought, but this must have been of a singular kind,

for cloud after cloud passed over his face. He forgot to smoke, and the coffee-cup stood untouched. Suddenly the silence around him was broken by a clear and beautiful child's voice, which sang a Finnish "people's song." Aberney started at the sound of these tones, which came from the woods. It was the same song Edith had sung the first time her father heard her. In Victor's soul these tones recalled very many bitter memories. He listened with intense interest to the melody, which brought back images of his dear paternal home and all those he had loved. When the song died away, he still sat with his head leaning on his hand, absorbed in reveries.

"It was a voice just like *hers*," thought he, and did not perceive that he expressed this thought aloud, until Aunt Sara uttered, —

"And yet those who are related to *her* are left to poverty, when you could —"

"Aunt!" exclaimed Victor hastily, and rose. "What is it that you are plotting?"

"You can amuse yourself with plotting, or perhaps you believe that it was through my management that that song was sung?"

"Yes, I do believe it. Who was it that sung?"

"Probably some of the neighbors' children. That matter is perfectly indifferent, and I only came to —"

Sara was not allowed to continue further. Aberney rose immediately and with hasty steps took his way to his room, the door of which he closed and locked.

"What a bull-head," muttered Aunt Sara.

The evening was unusually mild. The sun was hiding itself in the western ocean; when Aberney's door again opened, and he entered the saloon,

taking his way to the front porch. There was no one there, and, glad to escape meeting Sara, Victor walked across the yard and through the woods until he came to the sea-shore. He threw himself on the grass, took off his hat and let the evening breeze play caressingly over his brow, while he followed with his eyes the motion of the water.

The birds called to each other, and seemed to enjoy the glorious evening. Aberney lay at the foot of a rock, entirely concealed by the thick bushes. The learned man was roused from his reflections by a rustling sound from the top of the rock, and some stones which rolled down falling directly beside him. Before he had time to rise to see what it was that had occasioned these effects, he heard an uncommonly strong and ringing child's voice sing an old song, belonging to the very oldest "people's melodies," one of those which Aberney had heard in his childhood. The voice sang every verse twice, and with such a musical conception that it awakened Aberney's whole interest.

When the tones at last died away, he sprang up to see the singer.

Upon the rock sat a little girl. Her head was turned away, for her eyes were upon the water. Aberney could only see her profile; but this possessed a regular beauty rarely seen. The whole contour of this charming little head was beautiful, and it was easy to guess that she must possess upon a nearer view uncommon loveliness. She was still in her childhood, and could at the most be ten or eleven years of age.

Aberney regarded the girl a long time with close attention; at last she turned her head and saw him. She rose immediately and intended to leave the rock.

"My child, follow this path here," said Aberney, "then you avoid climbing."

The little girl nodded affirmatively, glided down light as a spirit, and in a few

minutes stood before Aberney, whom she greeted with a peculiarly open and fearless look.

"How do you dare to go alone here in the woods?" asked he, captivated by her appearance.

"Why should I not dare to do it? I am entirely alone, and I am so used to the woods, where I sing my songs for the birds, who listen to them, and I love the rocks and the trees; and though I have many times wished that Ajattera* would reveal herself and lead me astray, still it has never happened."

"Do you live in the neighborhood?"

"Certainly. I am the widow's daughter, as they call me. My home is at Ektorp. But who are you? I have never seen you before."

The little girl looked at the tall man, whose appearance inspired her confidence. With children the first impression is absolutely decisive. It is not reflection, reason, or intellect which speaks at that age, but pure instinct.

The child seated herself on a stone by the shore while she talked, and began to throw skipping-stones with small flat pebbles which she took up from the sand.

"You want to know who I am," answered Aberney, smiling, and seated himself also on a stone. "I am the new owner of Junta."

"Ah, now I know, that beautiful place there away in the woods. Old Annika said that a gentleman had moved there whom I ought to be very much afraid of." The little girl began to laugh. "You do not look very dangerous. Do you know what I thought when Annika told me that I could not go to that house?"

"Let me hear!"

"That the first thing I ought to do

* Is according to the Finnish people's belief a spirit of the woods belonging to the female sex, and who is accustomed to lead people astray in the woods.

was to go there. I did it to-day at dinner-time; but there were people in the yard who were at work, so I did not trouble myself to go any farther. How provoking! I have not been able to throw a good stone this long while. It is surely you who have evil eyes." She looked at Aberney.

"Ah, no, it is because you have chosen too heavy stones," replied he, finding himself much entertained by the girl's manner. "But tell me, why has Annika said that I was dangerous?"

"I do not know; but yesterday when I came home from one of my rambles, she said just so: 'Listen, Skuldfrid, you must not go to Junta; a gentleman lives there who is ill-disposed towards all little girls, to you especially.' When the old woman said that, she looked terribly frightened, which made me decide to go to Junta."

"You are not very obedient," said Aberney.

"I do not trouble myself to obey Annika. O no, when she says anything, I always do just the contrary."

"Who then do you obey?"

"I obey mamma," answered the little girl, quite seriously.

"What is your name?"

"Skuldfrid Smidt," said the child, and got up, adding: "now I cannot talk any longer with you, for I must go home. Come here to-morrow evening, and I will come and sing my songs for you." She nodded to him and sped away, light and quick as a little bird.

Aberney looked after her and thought,—

"An uncommon fresh and uncorrupted child. A little savage. I wonder who her parents are."

While the Professor was absent, a young boy about fourteen had arrived at Junta. He inquired for Mademoiselle Sara Hederman, was embraced by her

and kissed and caressed through tears. The old lady was so deeply affected at the sight of him, that she could not speak for a long while, but held the boy pressed close to her breast, sobbing like a child. When the first violent emotion had subsided, a multitude of questions followed. Aunt Sara had much that she wanted to know.

When her curiosity was somewhat satisfied, she said, —

“Now, dear child, I will go with you up to your room, where you will have to stay this evening. I must speak to Victor before I show you to him.”

Sara treated the boy to the best her pantry had to bestow; then she took him to a little chamber in the upper story. When he was regularly installed there, the old lady tripped down and reached the porch just as Victor came home.

Sara, who had not yet had time to see clearly how she should prepare Aberney for the arrival of the uninvited guest, and who had not at all devised her plan of attack, looked quite surprised at the sight of her nephew.

“Well, of all things, you home again already,” said she, with an unusually gentle voice.

“Do you think I come too soon?” asked Aberney, smiling good-humoredly. “It is ten o’clock.”

“Is it so late?” Sara’s tone was extremely tender. “It is high time that you should have a little supper.”

Sara hurried out to the kitchen, and in a short time a dainty little supper-table was spread in the porch, with fresh eggs and several of Aberney’s favorite dishes. While all these good things rained upon him from Sara’s otherwise parsimonious store-room, he thought, —

“I wonder what has come over the old lady. She does not usually treat me in this way when I do not fall in with her plans. She has certainly some motive in serving me with such a splendid supper.”

To Aberney’s great surprise, Sara did not speak a word either during or after the supper about anything but the garden, the improvements which ought to be made, etc. When Victor had finished eating, he remained sitting a long time and smoked. Sara kept him company, while she knit as usual upon her stocking.

“Aunt Sara, you ruin your eyes to sit and knit after dark,” said Aberney, rising. The pipe was smoked out.

“Ah, don’t you know that I never look at my knitting? but now it must be time to go to rest. Good night!” The old lady looked down at her apron, nodded to Aberney, and went to her room.

“She will certainly not live much longer. I have never seen her like this,” thought Aberney, and called his servant Anders, who was the Professor’s valet, lackey, and helpmate; he had served in the house of Victor’s parents. When Anders came out from the Professor’s room, he met Sara in the hall. She inquired if his master had retired.

“Yes indeed, that he has, Mamsell,” answered Anders.

“Were you able to keep silent about the company that has arrived here?” asked Sara.

“O Jemini, how you talk, Mamsell. Have I not promised you not to say a word about it?”

“That is right, Anders; now go to bed.” Sara went into the saloon, and directly afterwards to Aberney in his bedroom.

Anders thought, while he was crossing the yard, —

“I can venture my life upon it, that that was Harmer’s boy who came here. He certainly had her black eyes. Let us see now how the Professor likes the arrangement. Well, well, we shall soon know.”

While Anders came to these conclusions, Aberney, with no little astonishment, had seen Aunt Sara enter his room, and

that after he had gone to rest, — something which the modest old maid did not consider in accordance with propriety.

"What can be the matter that Aunt Sara comes in at this time!" exclaimed he, and found himself caught just like a rat in a trap. What the old lady now came to say he had to listen to, for there was no means of retreat possible.

"Ah, you see, dear Victor, as I have not for the whole day been able to speak with you, I suppose I must conquer my natural repugnance to calling on you after you have retired, in order to say what I have to communicate. You are now, in your turn, obliged to listen to me. You cannot very well spring from your bed, I should think. It is your stubbornness that has compelled me to employ this resource."

"I do not perceive the necessity of this course of action," answered Aberney, wrathfully.

"Do you not? But I do, and that is sufficient, I should presume. Now I ask you earnestly and decidedly: will you or will you not take the boy and educate him?"

The blood rushed up to Aberney's head as he answered with passion, —

"Aunt, I will have nothing to do with the criminal woman's son; this I have firmly declared once before, and I thought that you understood my character sufficiently to know that I never break my word."

"If you remain firm to an act so unjust as to leave the child without assistance because the mother has been guilty, then I consider it my duty to leave your house and share with him the remainder of my small means. It shall never be said about Sara Hederman, that she abandoned the one she could have helped. What matters it if Tage's mother has committed never so many faults, the child is not to be blamed for that! Besides, my dear Victor, she, poor creature, has had to suffer enough for them.

Now the question concerns an innocent child, whom she has so beseechingly confided into our hands; and if you close your heart to the poor mother's prayer, then I shall not." The old lady smoothed her apron with great zeal, and was so violently excited, that her head shook with a peculiar nervous trembling.

"No, Aunt Sara, you shall not take care of *her child*, you who have spent the most of your property upon your brother's and sister's children. I will give the boy a yearly allowance until he can provide for himself, but with the express condition that he may never place his foot over my threshold or in any manner try to come in contact with my person. I leave it to you to decide the amount that he may need for his studies, and then I desire that his name may not be mentioned between us."

"Well, I dare say you think that all that is required is to throw a pittance to the boy, and then leave him to the mercy of the world," screamed Sara in a perfect gust of rage, and in her vehement efforts to smooth the apron, wrinkled it all up; "but you see, it was not this that she entreated of you. I will tell you that I have for ten years taken care of him, and shall certainly do it hereafter without your assistance, if money had been the only concern; but it is a father, a home, a protector, that the boy needs and that he shall have. As to the condition, that he should not cross your threshold, it comes somewhat too late. The boy already sleeps under your roof."

"Aunt!" exclaimed Aberney, and sat up in his bed. "You have not —"

"Dared to let him come here? Yes indeed I have, and either he shall stay here or we will both leave the house, where a cold egotism and an unreasonable hatred to the mother reaches the child. Now I have spoken to the end. Either you adopt her son or I shall share with him the crumbs I possess. Let us see

if you reap any blessing from your conduct."

Sara set off to the door, without turning or throwing a glance at Aberney. Just as she laid her hand on the latch, he said with a suppressed voice, —

"Will you be so good as to stop a moment? I ought certainly to have the right to ask how that boy came here."

"Upon my solicitation, because I believed that I possessed a nephew with a heart. I have deceived myself; so it only remains to pack up my things and leave the place. Alone with your implacability, I hope you will one day understand how wrongly you have acted; but then it will be too late to make amends."

The latch turned, and Aunt Sara disappeared through the door, without Aberney's calling her back.

That night neither he nor Sara slept. The latter was busy pulling all her clothes from the drawers and packing them in trunks, which she without help dragged down from the garret. She was so heartily provoked, that she cried every little while. She packed and repacked. She put the contents of the drawers all topsy-turvy. She had been put completely out of balance. The starched apron was dreadfully wrinkled, and she did not once think of smoothing it out. When the working-bell was heard in the morning, and Sara put the finishing touch to her packing, the door opened and Victor came in. Aberney was unusually pale, and from his disturbed appearance one could easily discover that he had been awake the whole night.

"Aunt Sara, where have you lodged him?" asked he.

"In the yellow guest-chamber," was the answer.

"I suppose he is still asleep?"

"Well, what then! You certainly cannot mean to have me tear him from his bed, and start off with him in the middle of the night?" The old lady looked mightily enraged.

"I should like to see him," replied Aberney in a short voice.

"Open the door and go in," snubbed Sara; "but do not hinder me; I must go down and give orders to have the horses harnessed, before the men go to their work."

"It is unnecessary for you to depart."

"Am I not going? Well, you will see. Have I made myself known as such a weather-vane, that I change my resolution? No, my dear nephew, what I have once said is said for good."

"If you will be so kind, Aunt Sara, as to remain here only a few minutes, we will continue the conversation which you began last night."

Sara looked at her nephew and then went to one of the bureau-drawers. Aberney, who concluded from this motion that she intended to wait for his return, went out again and took his way to the guest-chamber, the door of which he opened very carefully.

In the bed, surrounded by light curtains, rested a young boy. He slept that deep and quiet sleep which is so peculiar to youth. Aberney stole with noiseless steps to the bed. He stopped and fastened his gaze upon the sleeper, who was an uncommonly handsome youth, with a profusion of light brown hair, which curled in disorder around a high and open forehead. Upon the parted lips played a defiant smile, probably called forth by his dreams.

Aberney looked at him a long time; then he turned quickly upon his heel, and left the room with as noiseless steps as he had entered it. He went directly to Aunt Sara's door, opened it, and said, —

"I will keep the boy in my house, and shall adopt him as my son. All departure is thus unnecessary."

The door closed again, and Aberney went to shut himself up in his own room.

Aunt Sara, who had remained standing by the bureau where Aberney left

her, swung round at his words ; but when the door closed as quickly as it had opened, she clasped her hands together and dropped upon a chair, so amazed was she. She did not long abandon herself to surprise. When the first impression of it had subsided, she whispered in great haste a prayer of gratitude to God, who had permitted her to win such a victory, and then a terrible flurry ensued to unpack all the things, and to obliterate all traces of the intended journey. The servants ought not (of course) to get anything to talk about. The old lady worked so hard that she was all overdone, when Lisa came up at seven o'clock to see if her mistress was ill, as she had not been visible. Sara found it expedient to say that she had been a little indisposed.

Aberney was not seen for the whole forenoon, and no one dared to knock at his door when he had shut himself in. That was a plain sign that he wished to be alone and undisturbed.

The newly arrived guest, young Tage, had breakfasted with Aunt Sara, and then taken a little walk around the garden with her.

The dinner-bell sounded clear and called Junta's people from work to the repast, and then Aberney opened his door and entered the room where the table was set ; but no person was visible. He went out on the front stoop, and told Anders, who was raking the garden, to ask Tage to come down, if he was in the guest-chamber.

The next moment the boy stood before Aberney.

"Has Aunt Sara told you that my home will henceforth be yours ? that you from this day shall regard me as your father ?" asked Aberney, with a voice that sounded somewhat harsh.

"Yes, Aunt Sara has told me so," replied the boy.

"Good, then I have nothing to add."

He reached Tage his hand. "I hope that we shall be satisfied with each other."

Tage took the offered hand, and carried it to his lips, stammering, —

"As long back as I can remember, *they* have told me to love the name of Aberney."

"*They*," repeated Aberney, but did not continue. He made a sign to Tage to follow him into the dining-room, where dinner and Aunt Sara met them.

Sara had a bran-new starched apron, and that in spite of its being in the middle of the week. She generally calculated one apron per week. A clean cap also surrounded the little meagre face ; for the other one had, during the excitement of the night, been totally destroyed. Sara would not have believed that she should be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven, if she had shown herself in a wrinkled apron and in a cap that was not as white as snow. The old lady had now resumed her usual appearance.

Aberney generally spoke very little, and was at this dinner more silent than usual. He asked Tage some questions about what he knew, and to what school he had gone in Helsingfors, etc. Not a single inquiry was made which had reference to his parents or his earlier life.

What especially pleased Aberney in his nephew was his open look, the freedom and unconstraint of his movements and speech. Tage was with Aunt Sara and Aberney just as if he had known them all his life, and yet he now saw them both for the first time.

After the meal the Professor called all the household together, and said to them, pointing to Tage, —

"Here you see *my son*, Tage Aberney."

When Aunt Sara and Victor were left alone, the old lady exclaimed, while she embraced him, —

"You are still my own boy, with a heart like a true Aberney. It was fine and noble to adopt *her* child and give him your name."

"Dear Aunt, one must do either *all* or *nothing*."

Towards evening Aberney took a stroll down to the shore ; but not a usual one, without any definite aim. He went directly to the place where he had met the little girl the preceding evening. When he arrived at the spot, he found her already there. She sat on the same stone, as at their first meeting, and cried to him, —

"It was nice that you came. I began to think that you would not be here. Then I should certainly have cried."

"Then you wanted to see me again?"

"Yes, very, very much." She jumped down from the stone, ran to Aberney, took his hand and drew him to the green, grassy carpet that lay spread at the foot of the rock. "Sit down here, and I will tell you why I should have felt bad if you had not come."

Aberney threw himself on the grass. The child took her place beside him, and laying her clasped hands upon his shoulder, she resumed, —

"When I returned home last evening, I thought until I went to sleep about how I should sing some of my songs for you to-night. This was something so new, that I just enjoyed myself over it."

"Why did it seem to you so entertaining?"

"Hm!" Skuldfrið leaned her head to one side and pondered a moment. "That I cannot tell; but you must know that, besides mamma, Annika, and the game-keeper, I have not sung for any one but the birds, and they cannot praise me, but you can. Besides, I thought that we might be a couple of good friends. I shall certainly like you very much."

It was perfectly impossible for Aberney not to smile at Skuldfrið's artless words. He assured her that he was her friend already. Who should not have felt drawn to this fresh and charming child of Nature! Although friendship at her age is for the most part very transitory, it has still something so attractive, that we are

captivated by it, because it is dictated entirely by the impulse of the moment. Besides, there was something so original about her, that she excited interest unavoidably, even had she been less beautiful.

"Shall I sing for you some Finnish songs?" she asked. "Do you like Finland?"

"Yes, very much. It is my native land."

With a voice strong and clear the little girl sang two songs, more than familiar to Aberney; one of them Edith had sung in her childhood, the other was one of his first compositions. While Skuldfrið sang, Aberney closed his eyes, and he fancied himself carried back to the happy years of childhood, when Finland was yet under Sweden, and when sorrow and grief were yet strangers to his heart. Tears stole involuntarily from the strong man's eyes and ran slowly down his cheeks at the thought of the many losses he had suffered.

Skuldfrið, who had fastened her eyes upon him, ceased abruptly when she saw tears on his cheeks. She exclaimed hastily, —

"What, do you weep! Has my song made you sad? And I who thought that you would like it."

"It was for Finland that I wept," answered Aberney. "My beloved, my precious Finland! Sing away, your songs are dear to me."

Skuldfrið finished her interrupted song, and then another. Aberney patted and praised her, at which she smiled so pleased; but when he asked her to sing one more, she answered laughing, —

"No, sir, not to-night. We must keep something for to-morrow. Now I shall go home."

Aberney rose, saying, —

"I will go with you."

Skuldfrið laid her finger upon her lips, and stood thinking; then she raised her head and replied, —

"Well, you can do so ; but you must not go as far as the house, for then Annika might see you, and after that I should certainly not be allowed to go outside the garden for a long time."

"And why so?"

"Annika does not want me to talk with any of the neighbors, except the country people."

Skuldfrid took Aberney's hand, and they started homeward, through woods and thickets.

"You speak constantly of Annika, and never of your mother ; how is that?"

"My mother is so good, so pious, that I sometimes think that she is a saint. I do not speak of her willingly because — because — I am so fond of mamma and yet — yet — I have such a respect for her, that I scarcely ever dare to laugh in her presence."

"You are perhaps seldom with your mother?"

"O no, sir, that is not so at all. The whole day long I read, sew, play, write, and draw for mamma. It is only in leisure moments that I am away from her. Then I love to run around in the woods."

"With whom of the neighbors does your mother associate?"

"Mercy, how ridiculous you talk ! We do not know any of the neighbors. Mamma never goes out except to church, where I am allowed to go with her."

"Have you no playmates?"

"O, yes, I have a very handsome cat and a great many doves."

With similar chat they pursued their way, and when they came to the end of the wood, Skuldfrid asked Aberney to leave her. She threw a kiss to him in farewell, and then ran, light and joyous as a gazelle, down a crooked lane which led from the path through the woods to the little solitary house, which had an indescribably charming and romantic situation on the shore of a lake.

At Ektorp, or the *widow's house*, as Fru Smidt's little place was generally called, we will make a little visit, some moments before Skuldfrid returns.

The building itself stood between a yard filled with large trees and a garden which extended to the lake, and was enclosed with an unusually high fence. The place was surrounded by a tall and sombre pine forest. The garden, situated by the lake-shore, was remarkably well taken care of, and provided with small arbors and a little summer-house. The latter, during warm weather, was Fru Smidt's favorite place. She sat there in the forenoon with her little daughter and instructed her. In the afternoon, when the merry child enjoyed her freedom and made her excursions, Fru Smidt remained there alone, working, weeping, and looking drearily out into space. She spent day after day in this summer-house, without any interruption in her habits.

Fru Smidt had lived six years in Ektorp. The ground was in the care of an overseer, and Annika was the housekeeper. The revenue of the property was small, and Fru Smidt's means limited, which rendered great economy necessary in the widow's house. She worked at times very diligently ; what she then did remained a secret between her and Annika ; but there were other times when she sank into melancholy, and for several weeks did nothing but read with Skuldfrid. Between times she wandered back and forth in her room or in the large garden path, as if pursued by some inner anguish.

On the above-mentioned evening she sat in the summer-house, busily occupied with a piece of embroidery. She was dressed entirely in black, even to the cap, which surrounded a pale face and silver-white hair. She seemed to be about forty years of age, this woman, over whose brow sorrow but not time had spread the snow of old age. It was still and quiet all around her. The only

sounds heard were the dashing of the waves upon the beach, and the song of the birds in the branches. Suddenly a shrill female voice was heard in full dispute with fresh, childish tones.

"Yes, I tell you what, Skuldfrið, this time I will certainly complain to your mother!" screamed the shrill voice.

"That you shall not, for I can tell mamma all about it myself," answered the child's voice.

Fru Smidt raised her head, and saw Skuldfrið running along the broad walk down to the summer-house, the glass door of which stood open. When the little girl was near it, she slackened her pace, and when she reached the door she walked quite properly and becomingly to her mother. She took her hand and kissed it saying, —

"Good evening, dear mamma." At the same time she turned her head, and saw Annika coming panting along the path and steering her course towards the summer-house. At this sight Skuldfrið hastened to add, before Fru Smidt had put any questions, —

"Mamma, Annika intends to tell tales of me; but I would rather tell you myself what I have done."

"So should I, my child," replied the mother, and a loving smile lighted up the sombre features.

"Well, it is so, that —"

"Skuldfrið runs around to the neighbors," interrupted Annika, mounting the steps of the summer-house.

"Let Skuldfrið speak for herself," said Fru Smidt. "You know that I do not like to have you go to the neighbors; why then do you do it?"

"Mamma, I have not been to anybody's," answered the little girl. "My whole fault is, that yesterday at the east point I met my friend, the owner of Junta. I sat on the rock and sang. He called to me to come down, which I did, and so we became real good friends. I asked him to come again to-day and

promised to sing for him, and he came. Now he has promised to like me, and that we shall meet often. Annika, who saw that he came with me, says that I have done something wrong, and that mamma will feel very bad about it; but I do not believe it." Skuldfrið took her mother's hand, adding: "Beloved mamma, you must not let Annika shut me up within this garden fence, but you must let me go and sing my songs in the evening to my friend. I shall be all the more industrious in the daytime."

"What is the name of your friend?"

"I do not know."

"But I do," muttered Annika, yet so low that neither mother nor daughter heard what she said.

Fru Smidt remained silent for a few moments; then she patted the child on the head and said very kindly, —

"You have so little joy, my poor child, that I certainly do not wish to deny you the one you now have. You may go and sing your songs for your new friend."

"No, mistress, that the child must not do," broke in Annika.

"And why not?" Fru Smidt looked at the old woman.

"The owner of Junta is called *Victor Aberney*."

A shiver ran through Fru Smidt's frame. She sat a long while motionless; then she rose, kissed Skuldfrið on the brow, and left the summer-house. Skuldfrið looked inquiringly at her mother; but as she appeared to be outwardly calm, the child could not imagine that this calmness concealed an inward agitation. With that happy heedlessness that belongs to her age, Skuldfrið did not attach any significance to her mother's leaving the summer-house so hastily. She was too much accustomed to the peculiarities of her disposition to reflect that the name of her friend might have been the cause of this sudden departure. When she was left alone with Annika, who looked quite sorrowfully after the

retreating one, Skuldfrið said with childish presumption, —

"Well, Annika, what did you gain for wishing to tell of me? Have I been scolded? Was I forbidden to go to the beach and meet my friend?"

"Hush, dear child, you do not imagine how much pain your childishness has caused," answered Annika, and left her.

"Now the old woman is angry," thought Skuldfrið, and went singing merrily to water the flowers and feed the doves, her usual evening occupation.

Early the next morning Fru Smidt was seen walking unquietly up and down one of the most remote paths in the garden. Her face was so sombre, that one seemed to read a hopeless despair in every feature, which had fastened its talons upon her heart, lacerating it without mercy. She pressed her clasped hands to her breast as if to keep her grief within those silent walls, so that no sound of complaint should find its way over her colorless lips.

The ashy pale face, the eyes red from sleeplessness, told of agonies which had driven all slumber and peace from her couch during the past night.

Annika stood a long time in the open door of the saloon, which led out to the terrace, and looked at the restless wanderer. At last she drew a deep sigh, and murmured, "Poor child, when will her grief become less?" She went down the terrace to the path where Fru Smidt was walking with an uneven step.

"How are you to-day?" asked Annika in the voice of a mother who is anxious about her child.

"Ah, is that you, Annika?" Fru Smidt stopped and cast an inquiring look at the servant.

"Now be good and come into the saloon; I have hot coffee there ready for you. It is just five o'clock, so no one

is up in the house except us two." Annika took Fru Smidt's hand, adding, "Do as the old woman wants you to and drink a little coffee; after a night without sleep and spent under the open sky, it is quite necessary. Think of little Skuldfrið and take care of her mamma."

Annika's wrinkled face showed so much tenderness, that the sight of it could not but do good to the heart; something like a friendly smile also glided over Fru Smidt's features, and she silently took her way to the saloon. When she had taken a cup of coffee, which Annika served to her with much satisfaction, she sat a while absorbed in thought, then turned to the old servant, saying, —

"Is Victor Aberney actually my nearest neighbor?"

"Yes, and therefore I scolded Skuldfrið for talking with him. Did I not know that —"

"That I carefully avoided him, you mean. That is true, and so will it continue eternally. He and I cannot meet. Yet, it is quite otherwise with Skuldfrið. She is free from all guilt, and how well it would be if she found a friend in Victor, perhaps a support for the future.

"But Victor's disposition of mind is not friendly."

"Towards me, no; but an interval of ten years has elapsed since then. What matters it, he does not know Skuldfrið's mother, and never will. May his interest only concern the child destiny has brought in his way. Besides, Annika, what right have I to separate Skuldfrið entirely from other people?"

"That I will not say; but I believe she is happiest so long as she remains separated from the world."

"So have I thought; but everything has a limit, and therefore when she wishes for something which can cheer her lonely life, I desire that she shall have it. What is the object of my existence? To live for her happiness, so that she shall see only the bright side of life, with-

out ever imagining that it has a dark one. Therefore place no restrictions upon my little summer bird ; may she fly around freely in woods and dales, and enjoy all that gives her pleasure."

A glad voice was now heard, singing a merry air, and light steps on the stairs which led to the upper story. In the next minute the door opened, and Skuldfrið, blooming and smiling as the clear spring morning, tripped into the room. At the sight of Fru Smidt her walk assumed a more orderly character, and she approached her with that stamp of respect which always distinguished her manner towards her mother.

That day she read more assiduously than usual. Mother and daughter worked zealously until the dinner-bell sounded. With a, "Now it is ended for to-day," Skuldfrið closed the book and kissed her mother's hand ; then she hurried from the summer-house to the dining-room to help Annika set the table, something which Skuldfrið always did when she thought she had annoyed the old servant.

The little girl was all attention and good-will. Annika could not help placing some cream and preserves for the child, as a reward for her good behavior. After the repast Skuldfrið took her hat, threw a roguish look at Annika and an inquiring one at her mother, while she said, —

"Now I am going to my doves, and afterwards to the beach to meet my friend."

Annika frowned, Fru Smidt nodded an assent, and in the next moment the bird was out of the cage.

That day Aberney was first at the place of meeting, so that Skuldfrið found him lying at the foot of the rock. When he caught sight of the little girl he extended his hand to her, saying, —

"Now come and sit here by me, and tell me a little about your parents and

yourself. I have thought much about you since yesterday.

"I have done the same," replied Skuldfrið, and seated herself beside him, relating that Annika had been angry because she had seen Skuldfrið with Aberney. When she had finished this account, the Professor asked, —

"What was your father?"

"My father is dead, and one must never speak of him. I must have been very little when he died, so Annika says ; but I cannot remember that she said what he was. I will ask her."

"Were you born in this place?"

"O, no, that I was not, for I remember very well to have been in a place where there were very, very large houses, many people, and much driving, and that everybody spoke a language different from the one we speak ; but it was neither German nor French."

"Have they never told you what place it was?"

"No ; when I have asked Annika about it, she has answered, the child must not think of that time, but forget it, else she will give her mother trouble, and that is something which I am very much afraid of doing."

"How old were you when you left that place? Do you know?"

"Four years, for I am now eleven, and we have lived in Ektorp seven years. I remember so well when we went away from that large city, where I could go out but very little. We drove over broad streets and places where fine churches and statues stood. Then we came to other places, which were also called cities ; but they were small, and at last one evening we came here. Since then I have not been anywhere else, with the exception of three times a year when we go to church."

"Well, would you not like to go once more to the large fine city?"

"No, I certainly would not. There I could seldom go out, and never without

Annika's attending me. Here I can run around in the woods, row on the lake, and be free and glad. Do you not think it is very pleasant to live here?"

Aberney smiled, and, instead of replying, he asked her to sing one of the songs that she had sung the day before.

"And why just that one?" asked Skuldfrið.

"That you shall know afterwards."

When the song was ended, Aberney said, —

"Do you know who composed the music for that song?"

"No!"

"I did."

"You!" exclaimed the child, and threw her arms quite delighted around his neck, while she poured out her surprise and admiration in the most artless and ingenuous words, accompanied by childish caresses.

This evening Aberney again attended her a part of the way home. The original child had actually captivated the learned man, and the next day Fru Smidt received a letter from him with the following contents: —

"MADAME: Although an entire stranger, I take the liberty of writing to you. You have a daughter, an uncommon and richly endowed child. Chance has brought her and me together. You know in what manner. I am aware that you do not receive visits, and that you never make them. Very well, I respect your solitude, and will not disturb it by forcing a visit upon you; but, on the other hand, your little daughter interests me too much for me to refrain from making you a proposition, namely, that I may share with you the care of her instruction, and that you will grant me the joy of developing her rare intellect and musical talent. I believe myself capable in both respects of being of no slight use to your daughter. I have myself a son, who would become your

daughter's companion in instruction and her playmate in leisure moments. Skuldfrið is now of that age when she needs a companion who can share her childish joys and with whom she can speak of her plays. We older people cannot be to so young a mind what one of equal age is, and I believe that association with my son would be to her both useful and pleasant. In short, I desire to undertake her general education, as well as the entire direction of her musical studies.

"You are perhaps astonished at my proposition; but I will give you my motives by telling you who I am.

"I am what is called a learned man, with all the peculiarities of a book-worm; that is to say, I am a sworn enemy to society, and a lover of solitude and my books. I am interested in all that is uncommon, and therefore in your daughter. My old aunt takes care of my house.

"If you accept my proposition, a carriage shall bring Skuldfrið to Junta every afternoon. I await your reply.

"With respect,

"VICTOR ABERNEY."

The messenger brought back the following answer from Fru Smidt: —

"With gratitude your proposal is accepted by

"SKULDFRIÐ'S MOTHER."

The following afternoon a little droschka stopped at the gates of Ektorp. Some minutes afterwards Skuldfrið sat glad and smiling beside the Professor's Anders, who gave the horses a touch and away they went.

"Mercy, such notions as the man has," muttered Aunt Sara when Anders drove off to bring Skuldfrið. "What is he now going to do with that young one? He had hard work to prevail upon himself to take the boy."

Aunt Sara was actually ill disposed towards Skuldfrid; and when the carriage returned and the little girl jumped from it, Sara intended to go up to her room without greeting the child; but Skuldfrid, who did not exactly understand such piques in the way of politeness, ran after her with brisk steps, and looked so winsome when she courtesied before the old lady, that her face immediately brightened. She received the child with a kindly smile. Aberney stood in the door of the saloon. As soon as Skuldfrid caught sight of him she hurried forward and took his hand, which she kissed with great vivacity.

Young Tage had thrown himself down by one of the windows, regarding the new-comer with curious looks while he thought, —

“That girl moves as if she were a boy. It may be real pleasant to have her for a companion.”

Pleasant it also became; for in less than half an hour the Skuldfrid of eleven and the Tage of fourteen years were the best friends in the world. Tage was the first one of her own age that Skuldfrid had come in contact with, among children of the so-called upper classes. She had hitherto known only the peasantry, and with them she had never been upon any familiar footing.

We must now for some moments leave the inmates of Junta and Ektorp, to go somewhat back in time and speak of events which transpired some scores of years before our story.

After the revolution of 1778 there was in Sweden a nobleman belonging to the “Cap” party, who from bitterness over political changes abandoned his fatherland and went to Russia. There he entered the army, under the assumed name name of Canitz. Some years before the revolution he had married a

wealthy Finnish girl of noble descent, and with her had received some considerable estates in Finland. When he abandoned his country he had a wife and two sons. The wife, however, soon sank under the sorrow of seeing her husband in the service of Sweden's oldest enemy. She died shortly after in Finland at Kronobro, an estate of hers.

After his wife's death he brought his sons to Russia, and educated them to become subjects of that country.

In the war of 1788, Canitz and his eldest son stood in the Russian ranks against their countrymen, and were rewarded for the bravery with which they distinguished themselves. Shortly after the peace of 1789 Canitz died. The eldest son, then captain in a Russian regiment, married a noble and wealthy Russian lady, in the following year. An adverse destiny ordained that this marriage should be childless for several years. It really looked as if the new Barons Canitz would die out with the two sons of the father who had been a traitor to his country; for the youngest had remained unmarried, and lived constantly abroad. He had chosen a diplomatic career.

In the war of 1808 the eldest Canitz again took part, and stood for the second time with his hand armed against his countrymen. His name had become a dread and an abhorrence to the Finnish people, because they heard that he was of Swedish birth. At the conclusion of peace he was made a general, and became father to a son which his wife had just presented him. This gift cost the mother her life.

The year after her death General Canitz obtained a military position in Finland, and then for the first time he entered into possession of his mother's domain, Kronobro. The General found it in a neglected and quite dilapidated condition; but with the means that he now had at his command, it was easy to

set the old country seat in order again. The main building was torn down, and upon its site a stately palace was erected. The former steward was dismissed and a German was sent for, who should improve and cultivate the soil. In short, within a few years Kronobro was one of the finest estates in the whole district, especially as the General was constantly adding to the grounds and thus extending his domain.

The General's little son, Lothard Constantin, had been brought to Finland, and while the father remained there, the boy was educated at home by a middle-aged German lady of good family. When the heir of the princely estate was seven years of age, he was sent to a German institution of learning, attended by a young Pole as tutor.

What had become of the General's younger brother was not known. He was as if lost, and the General's whole appearance at Kronobro indicated that he regarded himself as the sole owner of his mother's estate.

Of the few who had known the two brothers in their childhood, when their parents were established in Finland, there were none who felt disposed to approach the man who had fought against his countrymen, and thus the General was delivered from all questions concerning his brother.

The stern, gloomy, and proud warrior was little disposed to renew the acquaintance with those he had known in youth, but showed an icy haughtiness towards all who were Finns or Swedes. Having become a Russian in all his sympathies, he entertained a manifest aversion for everything which reminded of Sweden. Perhaps at these remembrances some voice within accused him of the evil which he had helped to occasion his fatherland. Surely the brother's blood that he had shed cried for revenge when he met with countrymen, and so he avoided all contact with them.

Ten years had elapsed since the General was recalled from his service in Finland. During this period he had been to Kronobro twice, and then only for a short time; but he sent his *Homme d'affaires* over every year to examine the accounts, and see that the estate was well cared for.

In April of the same year that Aberney moved to Junta, the steward of Kronobro received direction to put the place in order and arrange it with the greatest magnificence for the General and his son, who with a great number of guests were to arrive there at midsummer, and remain over the season.

The large saloons, all the guest-chambers, and the young Baron's apartments were newly furnished and fitted up with a fabulous magnificence. The whole neighborhood, even the inmates of the smallest shanty, told of the fine things that had been brought to Kronobro.

Ektorp's and Junta's residents were the only ones who did not speak about it, although the former was but a few miles distant from Kronobro, and the latter yet nearer. The reason certainly was not that they lived in ignorance of these important doings, for all the reports about them were given in confidence by the overseer Ivar to Annika, but remained with her, without being communicated either to Skuldfrid or Fru Smidt. It was the same with Aunt Sara. The old lady was very much interested in small gossip and news, but she never communicated anything of this to her nephew, because she knew he detested all such things. The consequence was that the chief persons lived in complete ignorance of that which was the subject of conversation for the whole parish.

The day before midsummer eve the General arrived at Kronobro with his son and the expected guests. The domain, so long forsaken, swarmed with people. Beautiful ladies, stately cavaliers in brilliant uniforms, and star-decorated old

men filled the rooms. The young heir's return from the German institute was celebrated with all possible festivity.

Lothard Constantin Canitz was then a youth of about seventeen, with a fine, intelligent, pale, and remarkable countenance; but a supercilious smile and a stamp of scornful contempt disfigured the otherwise regular features. It seemed that passions too soon aroused had met in conflict with his heart's nobler instincts, and had produced a chaos within him, from which self-love and contempt for others were engendered.

He was tall and slim, with an almost sickly appearance, which did not very well correspond with the fire in his eye, or the liveliness and rashness of his movements. At seeing this youth the question rose involuntarily, whether it was a physical or mental suffering that had prematurely paled the cheeks and bent the body, so that the former had lost the freshness of youth and the latter its elasticity.

Constantin had not seen his father since his seventh year. Six weeks previous to their arrival at Kronobro, the General embraced his son after this long separation. This had made the father a stranger to Constantin, and occasioned the coldness with which he treated the General at their first meeting. Perhaps this was the reason why he showed an utter lack of filial affection, and responded to his father's tenderness with a striking indifference. At their interview directly after Constantin's arrival in St. Petersburg, the General expressed the wish that his son should enter the military academy and fit himself for a naval officer. To which Constantin answered, —

"O well, why not. No matter what I become. A Russian is best fitted for the office of executioner."

"My son, you ought to remember that —"

"I must be prudent here in this cursed

land," interrupted Constantin smiling scornfully. "Be calm, my father, I shall not forget it."

The General contracted his eyebrows, without saying anything to his son, but sent for his tutor instead, Dr. Wagner. In sharp words the General reproached the Doctor for the false direction his son's mind seemed to have taken.

"I charged you to educate him into a well-bred youth and a good Russian nobleman; but to my surprise I find him neither the one nor the other, according to my expectations. Could your Polish blood possibly have tempted you to act in opposition to my instructions? If so it might happen that —"

"Herr General," interrupted Wagner, with an insinuating smile, "I have tried to fulfil my duty as tutor conscientiously; but Baron Constantin is like a young lion, he is not easily tamed and naturally takes the opposite direction to the one we desire. He is however very prudent, and will never compromise himself."

"Good, we will see. The responsibility stands with you."

In the evening of the same day the Doctor found himself with his pupil, who lay outstretched on a sofa in an extremely elegant cabinet within his private apartments.

"Ah ha, the old man has given you a lecture, my dear Doctor," said the youth, "and you have taken it so seriously that you are afraid to accompany me in my hunt after adventures. Bah! Let him growl. I swear that, whatever happens, no harm shall befall you. So away with all scruples, and let us see if this detestable St. Petersburg can offer play, girls, and wine."

"Baron, we are no longer in Heidelberg, and therefore I say decidedly, you must commit no follies here."

"No. If I commit them by myself, without company, who shall be able to hinder me?"

"I!"

"In what way?" inquired Constantin, springing up.

"I should then be compelled to tell the General that I have been weak enough to act in direct opposition to his instructions, and that in place of forming you into a Russian subject, I have educated you into a free-minded man. Yes, I should then confess that I had so completely disregarded his wishes, and, in spite of his commands, had allowed you to learn the Swedish language."

"Well, what does it matter to me, if you tell him all that?"

"Not much; but he would have *me* sent to Siberia."

"Ah, Wagner, you have a dangerous mode of conquering me!"

Constantin threw himself down again on the sofa. In this moment the youth's features had a truly noble expression.

A whole month had passed over the aristocratic company visiting at Kronobro, when one beautiful July evening Skuldfriid and Tage left Junta together. The latter was to attend his playmate home, which was usually the order of the day.

Through the large, tall pine forest, which lay between Junta and Ektorpe, ran a beautiful wood-path. By taking it the distance was much shortened between Aberney's home and the widow's. When the two children had gone about half-way to the hill, they used to sit down and rest, speaking of one thing and another, or else Skuldfriid sang for Tage. The evening was unusually warm and still. They seated themselves under a tall pine, which overshadowed them with its branches.

"Have you ever been to Kronobro?" asked Tage.

"No, I certainly have not, and you may be very sure that I never intend

to go there," answered Skuldfriid with the shrewdest little manner in the world.

"And why not? I intend with the first chance I get to go and see the stately country seat. You must know that Anders said that the rooms were to be furnished with chairs and sofas of gold and silver. Now there is so much company there from Russia, that they give great entertainments every day. It would be very pleasant to see all that, and I think of going there with Anders one of these days."

"No, Tage, that you shall not," exclaimed Skuldfriid, with an expression of fear.

"And why not?"

"Because," Skuldfriid looked cautiously around and lowered her voice as she continued, "a curse rests upon the whole of Kronobro, which falls upon all those who enter that unlucky place, so that some misfortune sooner or later reaches them."

"What childish talk!" retorted Tage, with an air of superior discernment.

"Dear Tage, it is not foolish talk at all, but the pure truth. You must know that General Canitz's father was a traitor, that is to say, that he was a Swede and yet went to war against Sweden. The General himself has done the same. During the war many Swedish and Finnish prisoners were brought to Kronobro, and it is said the General so ill-treated them that they died of misery. They each and all of them called down a curse upon Kronobro, its owner, and all who came under its roof. Besides, the General's mother died there of sorrow, because her husband sold himself to the Russians; and she haunts the place, weeping over her wicked son. The General has in Kronobro taken his brother's life, and buried him in a cellar, so that when it is midnight deep sighs are heard from the vault. O, what a terrible place that country seat is."

"Who has told all these stories?" asked Tage, looking quite thoughtful.

"Annika has in the winter evenings told me so many strange things about Kronobro and its owner. One night she told me how bad the Finnish and Swedish prisoners were treated; and while she was speaking about it my mother came in and heard what she said. Mama then told her never to mention anything that concerned the General, but rather to talk of other things. My mother laid her hand on my shoulder and added, 'Do not occupy your mind with Kronobro, but remember that we must shun evil even in our thoughts, and all is evil that bears the name of Canitz.'"

"I shall certainly speak with papa about that matter," said Tage. "Through him I shall know if it is true what Annika has said."

When this resolution was taken, Tage asked his companion to sing a song for him. With a clear voice she sang the following:—

"My peace I will not sell
For all the gold of Spain,
Nor discontented dwell
In any idle aim.
I will not dainty eat,
Gold's glitter shall not lure,
If thus from anxious beat
My heart shall be secure."

In the same moment that the song ceased, a youth leaped over the ditch behind them, and exclaimed in broken Swedish, —

"Here, girl, sing that song again, it pleases me; I want to hear it once more."

Skuldfriid and Tage got up at the sight of the stranger. The latter took Skuldfriid by the hand, saying, —

"Come, let us go!"

"Do first what the Baron has commanded," said a gentleman of about thirty, who now jumped over the dike in his turn, and stood before the children; his accent had also something foreign.

"Shall Skuldfriid sing upon command?" asked Tage. An indignant flush burned

on the boy's cheeks, and he looked proudly at the stranger.

"Do you mean to say, you shameless scamp, that I shall request the young one to sing?" exclaimed the youth.

"Yes, I do," replied Tage, defiantly.

"My child, it is the young Baron Canitz," said the older gentleman, and would have patted the boy on the head; but he pushed away the hand, and only grasped Skuldfriid's arm the firmer, repeating with an expression of horror, —

"Canitz!"

Both made a motion to go.

"Stop!" commanded Constantin, and placed himself in their way. "Do you not understand that I wish to hear that song over again?"

"I will not sing," said Skuldfriid, and cast a look of abhorrence upon Constantin. "I never sing for —"

"A *Russian*," filled in Tage, and took several steps to get away from the place with Skuldfriid; but Constantin seized her by the arm, and pulled her away from Tage, saying in an angry tone, —

"I have said that you *shall sing*, and nothing less will do; if you do not obey, then you may take the consequences, and that protector of yours, who dares to be insolent." Constantin raised his riding-whip, as if with the intention of executing his threat.

"No impetuosity," warned the older gentleman, but he had not time to say anything more; for when Tage saw Constantin raise the riding-whip over Skuldfriid, he rushed upon the young Baron and gave him a blow in the face, exclaiming, perfectly enraged, —

"Let go of Skuldfriid!"

With a strong motion of his arm Constantin flung Tage, who was considerably his inferior in stature and strength, far from him, so that he tumbled backwards into a ditch.

"Miserable scamp, I will crush you and your sister for having dared to lay a hand on me," shrieked Constantin, and

gave Skuldfrið first a blow over the face, and then one over the shoulder. At this sight Tage was again on his feet, and with a wild fury he threw himself over Constantin, who to defend himself was obliged to let go of Skuldfrið. Some moments of terrible struggle ensued, which gave Constantin the victory. He had got Tage under him and lifted his riding-whip to thrash his antagonist right soundly with the handle of it, when Skuldfrið seized the upraised arm, crying in a voice full of anguish, —

“You shall not, you must not beat Tage!”

Without calculating his movements in the excited condition in which he was, Constantin flung Skuldfrið as carelessly from him as he had a moment before done with Tage. She fell backwards and remained lying motionless. At Skuldfrið's intervention, Tage had, however, succeeded in freeing himself, and for a few moments the two youths tumbled over each other like two balls, and then again stood upon their feet; at the next attack, Constantin seized his opponent by the neck, lifted him high in the air, and then threw him face foremost on the ground, after which he gave him some blows, saying, —

“Shameless wretch of a peasant, now you shall learn to lower your tone.”

“For God's sake, Baron, remember that we are in Finland!” exclaimed Dr. Wagner, who stood bending over the senseless Skuldfrið. “I believe that your ferocity has cost both children their lives.”

At Wagner's words the riding-whip fell from Constantin's hand, and seizing Tage around the waist he lifted him up. The blood flowed from the boy's forehead. When he was raised, he drew a deep breath, made a feeble effort to get loose and stood again upright, but staggered when he would have taken a step towards Constantin, so that he was obliged to stop and support himself against a tree. The sound of a carriage was now heard approaching.

“Quick, away, Baron,” said the Doctor. “If any one should see you, it might lead to great difficulties. Hurry, or, by God, if you delay a moment longer, I will not do anything to help the children here.”

“But —” stammered Constantin.

“Baron Canitz!” said the Doctor in a determined voice, and rose to his full height. “Absent yourself immediately. You have already done more than sufficient evil.”

Constantin jumped over the ditch and disappeared in the wood.

Tage had recovered enough to be able to wipe away with his handkerchief the blood which ran down over his eyes. The first glance, when he was able to see, fell upon Skuldfrið.

“My God, what has happened!” faltered he; and holding his handkerchief before his bleeding brow, he staggered up to his little pale playmate, who in the same moment drew a deep sigh and opened her eyes.

“How are you, my child?” asked the Doctor.

“Dear, dear Skuldfrið, how is it with you?” sobbed Tage, throwing himself on his knees at her side, and with his free hand grasping one of hers.

Skuldfrið looked first at the Doctor, then at her playfellow, and afterwards threw herself upon the neck of the latter and burst out weeping, while she murmured, —

“Tage, Tage, *he* has beaten us!”

She brought her hand to her cheekbone, over whose fine curve a dark red stripe was visible after Constantin's riding-whip.

In the mean time the carriage came nearer and nearer, and was soon within sight. It was a covered travelling-carriage. Just as it was passing by, Wagner called to the coachman to stop; an order which the latter immediately obeyed.

“Where are you driving?” asked the Doctor.

"To X——'s Station," was the answer.

"Tell me, children, where are you from?" said Wagner to Tage, who all the while held Skuldfrið's hand fast in his. The little girl had received such a severe blow in the neck, that she was completely confused.

"Skuldfrið lives at Ektorp, right by here," said the boy, forgetful of the pain that the wound on his brow caused him.

"Can you," resumed the Doctor, turning to the coachman, "ask those for whom you drive, if they are willing to take these two children in the carriage to a little estate which lies on the road to X——'s Station? They have fallen and hurt themselves and cannot go home."

"That you have got to ask for yourself, for you see, the lady that I am driving does not understand a word I say," answered the peasant.

The traveller at the same instant pushed away the curtains from the carriage window, and the veiled head of a woman became visible.

"Pardon me, Madame," said the Doctor in French, "for detaining you; but I must beg of you to show these children the kindness of taking them to an estate near by."

The lady bowed her head affirmatively and opened the carriage door herself. Wagner lifted up Skuldfrið and also Tage, who could scarcely persuade himself to let go of her hand for a moment.

"Stop at the first house to the right," said the Doctor to the coachman, after he had thanked the lady. "I shall be there before you," he added. The next moment Wagner was over the ditch, and had disappeared in the woods.

On the way the veiled lady took care of the two children with much tenderness. She had bound her handkerchief around Tage's bleeding brow, and bathed Skuldfrið's temples with cologne. While she was absorbed in these little cares, she had lifted the close veil. She had a pale,

sad face, with a pair of large and dark eyes. She was no longer young; but a certain something in these features indicated that in her younger years she had been prepossessing. When they had reached the crooked and narrow lane which led from the main road down to Ektorp, the carriage stopped. The gate was opened by Dr. Wagner. After thanking the lady to the utmost, he lifted out Skuldfrið; but when he would have helped Tage down, the boy pushed away his hand and jumped out by himself. The next moment the carriage was out of sight, and the Doctor had taken his burden to Ektorp, where he was met by Annika, who was almost paralyzed at the sight of the child carried by a strange gentleman, and followed by a boy with a bloody bandage around his head.

Wagner succeeded, however, in making it clear to the old woman that the two children had been frightened, so that they fell and hurt themselves, and that Skuldfrið needed quiet and care. As Wagner spoke with a strong foreign accent, Annika found it somewhat difficult to understand him right away. She comprehended however the main thing, which was that Skuldfrið needed rest and care; and therefore it was not long before the little girl lay in her room in the upper story. Annika was set by the Doctor in full activity with mustard-plasters, etc. Tage had followed Skuldfrið faithfully, and with agonized looks regarded his little playmate's confused expression. While he stood thus leaning against the sofa, it seemed to him as though the floor moved under his feet, and finally as if he saw Skuldfrið through a mist. He took hold of the sofa convulsively, but felt himself at the same time lifted up by a pair of arms, after which all around him disappeared.

When Annika returned up stairs, she found Tage lying on the bed, and Skuldfrið on the sofa.

"Merciful goodness, is the Professor's

boy also down?" exclaimed she. "God help us!"

After Tage's wound had been dressed by the Doctor and the boy recalled to his senses, Wagner had the horses harnessed and sent him home to Junta. He declared that the swoon was only a result of loss of blood, and that Tage's condition was not at all dangerous. It was different with Skuldfrið, however; she had received a severe contusion of the head, which had badly affected the brain.

At the age of eleven, when the body is healthy, Nature is a powerful physician; this was proven with Skuldfrið.

Fru Smidt, who not until the Doctor's departure had been apprised by Annika of Skuldfrið's condition, immediately took her place at the sick-bed; and in the course of a few weeks the child was out of all danger. Dr. Wagner had attended her with a praiseworthy zeal and a care which did the physician honor.

Fru Smidt, however, carefully avoided meeting the Doctor, although she watched night and day over her daughter. As soon as Wagner arrived, Fru Smidt went into the adjoining room, while Annika received him and took his directions.

The very next day after the sad occurrence Aberney called at Ektorp. He was shown into the saloon by a servant, and after a moment's waiting a note was handed him with the following contents:—

"So long as Skuldfrið's condition demands that her mother shall watch by her sick-bed, this mother asks of you that you will not visit her daughter. You shall be informed of her state of health every morning."

Aberney read this strange note twice through, when he took his leave. During Skuldfrið's whole illness, he sent a messenger twice a day to inquire how she was; but if the Professor, with his high ideas of individual freedom, respected Fru Smidt's desire too much to intrude upon her in any way, Tage by no means felt disposed to do it.

For four whole days the boy was obliged to keep his bed on account of the pain and fever which the wound caused; but in spite of what he had to endure, he would certainly have gone to Ektorp, had not Aberney forbidden him to leave his room; a command which it is very doubtful if he would have obeyed, had not Aunt Sara or Aberney constantly kept him company. Thus there was no alternative left for Tage but to keep himself still, something which excited all his impatience. He thought that the pains became worse and worse every day, and in his disquietude at being obliged to remain at Junta, when he wished to be with Skuldfrið, he complained every moment and threw himself back and forth on the bed. He literally tried the patience of those around him. The whole day through he racked his brains to discover a way to get out of the sick-room and betake himself to Ektorp.

On the fourth day in the evening, when Aberney himself had bound a fresh bandage around the boy's forehead, and the latter had been very impatient under the operation, the Professor said,—

"You are a coward, to make such a fuss over a scratch. What sort of a boy are you to grieve for so little?"

"O, it is not for that, but because I am shut up in my room," stammered Tage.

"You have had a fever constantly, and as long as it lasts you must keep your room. Good night now, my boy, and thank God that you are not as sick as little Skuldfrið." The Professor patted the boy on the head and went away.

How ignorant are the wisest of men in judging of the feelings of children or young people! They only perceive the expression, not the motives of them. So now Aberney only saw the ebullition of impatience with Tage, not that which called it forth; and so he did not consider it out of the way to remind Tage that his little playmate was sicker than

he. The result was that Tage would go to Ektorp at any price.

In the evening, after Aunt Sara had bidden him good night, and all in Junta had gone to rest, Tage got up. True his head was a little dizzy and his limbs somewhat weak ; but his resolution stood firm, he must go Ektorp, even should he be obliged to creep there.

Quite carefully he stole down the stairs, and had great difficulty in silencing the house dog with friendly words, who would fain have opposed the night expedition. At last Tage succeeded in getting out into the woods ; and though his strength was feeble, he walked fearlessly ahead in the beautiful summer night. Certainly ten times he was forced to rest, and to lean his heavy aching head on his hands for a while to recover strength ; but notwithstanding that both pain and weakness offered resistance, it did not once enter his mind to desist from continuing his way to Ektorp. When he had gone three fourths of the distance, he fell down, completely exhausted. He laid his sick head on the turf and thought, —

“I shall go on, I must go on, even if I should die from it. It is only silliness that I fancy myself to be so tired ; after a while I will continue my way, and shall not rest until I get to Ektorp.”

So great was the power of the boy's will, that after a few moments he continued his way to Ektorp without interruption. He went into the court-yard and literally dragged himself to the gable of the house, where he knew that Skuldfrið's window was situated. How often had she not shown it to him. Under this window, beyond which was the object dearest to the youth, he seated himself. It seemed to him that his heart was lighter, now that he found himself so near her. He lay down on the bench, took off his cap which he used for a pillow, folded his hands as in prayer, and fell asleep from weariness.

The first rays of day fell on the sleeper

and awakened him. His head ached violently, and it was a long time before he was able to lift it up. With a powerful effort he at last succeeded. A long while he sat motionless, and began to consider how he should manage to see Skuldfrið. Just then some one opened the window, which was right above his head. Tage looked up but did not see any one. Instead, he discovered behind the hedge an espalier which went up the side of the house almost to the window. Tage deliberated, —

“If I ask Annika to let me see Skuldfrið, she will show me away, as she did papa ; but if I should climb up this espalier and jump into the room, then I could certainly see her, in spite of all who might be in there.”

Said and done. Tage began, though with some difficulty, to climb up the trellis. When he came up to the window, he looked into the room. There was not a soul there. To the right stood a bed, the curtains of which were carefully drawn together. Yet a couple of steps, and the young adventurer found himself in Skuldfrið's chamber. The door of the adjoining room stood a little ajar. Tage stopped a moment and listened, but as everything remained still and quiet, he went softly to the bed and pushed aside the curtains. Here Skuldfrið reposed upon the snow-white pillow, herself pale as a broken lily. She slumbered. Tage stood immovable and looked at the dear features with tears in his eyes. She appeared to him as if she had been dead. Thus some minutes elapsed, when Skuldfrið suddenly opened her eyes.

“Tage !” exclaimed she in a voice, which, though feeble, still expressed all the joy she felt. She twined her arms about his neck, and whispered, “God be thanked that you came.”

At Skuldfrið's cry a movement was heard in the adjoining room. Without either of the children's perceiving it, Fru Smidt's sad form appeared upon the

threshold. At the sight of the boy she drew back immediately, and directly afterwards the sound of a bell was heard. The next moment Annika entered.

The old woman did not dare to grumble, although when she saw Tage she felt a great desire to scold; for the Doctor had said that Skuldfrið must be kept quiet. At the first word to Tage that he must go away, Skuldfrið became excited, and Annika ceased immediately. Skuldfrið held Tage's hand fast, and would not have him leave her. Annika, who did not know how she ought to behave, went in to Fru Smidt, to hear her will. In the mean time Skuldfrið seized hold of Tage's arm, saying with vehemence, —

"Tage, you must never speak of our being beaten. You have not told any one about it, have you?"

"No, Skuldfrið, I have not. Before I have had reparation for you and myself, I shall not speak about it to anybody," replied the boy, with a higher color on his cheeks. He now related how he had stolen away, as well as that he was obliged to be at home before breakfast.

When Annika returned, she brought permission from Fru Smidt that Tage could come and visit Skuldfrið whenever he wished. Fru Smidt's overseer was ordered to drive Tage back to Junta.

Upon his arrival home, young Tage received a reproof from Aberney; but this was not dangerous, and was entirely forgotten when the Professor promised that Tage could visit Ektorp the next day.

Two weeks after this, Skuldfrið was considerably better, and spent the afternoon lying upon a bench in the garden. She now suffered only from dizziness, a feeling which the Doctor said would for a time trouble her. Tage was with her every afternoon, and then he read aloud or told stories.

At last, after a month's time, she was entirely recovered, and could, to her inexpressible joy, resume her trips to Junta; but it was all over with the pleasant walks home, for the Professor's Anders drove Skuldfrið both to and from Junta.

Often when Tage and Skuldfrið were alone, they spoke with deep bitterness about Constantin Canitz, and then the latter would exclaim, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, —

"If I live a hundred years, I shall never forget the terrible shame that you and I have been beaten by him. Mamma has always said that it is an indelible disgrace to be struck; and you see, Tage, never before has any one touched me with a finger, in the intention of striking me. *He*, a Canitz, has done that, and I shall never forgive him."

She pointed to the scar on Tage's brow, adding, —

"I shall until my death detest the one who gave you that, and at the sound of his name I shall always feel the pain of the blows he gave me in the face."

Constantin had after the occurrence with the children left Kronobro quite suddenly, although all the guests and the General himself, remained there.

Dr. Wagner had been appointed the provincial physician, and so he remained.

All that one knew about Constantin's sudden departure was, that the same evening that the scene in the woods occurred he had received a billet, which arrived with a messenger from the station. After its perusal he had immediately ridden away, and did not return until the next morning, when he sought the General and had a long conversation with him.

On the afternoon of the same day the General announced to his guests that his son was obliged to leave for the military school at St. Petersburg.

We will now transport ourselves six years forward in time. To the inhabitants of Ektorp and Junta these had passed without any especially remarkable events.

Every fall Professor Aberney went away from Junta to Abo. Tage and Aunt Sara then accompanied him, and during their absence Junta was occupied only by the overseer and his wife. At Ektorp the winters all passed much after the same manner; Skuldfrið read, practised, worked, drove to church, and visited here and there a cottage where her generous hands always left some blessing. So had her life passed from childhood's years, and she felt no longing for any other manner of existence.

In the spring Aberney returned to Junta, when she again met her good friend Tage and Aunt Sara, and then commenced the lessons, walks, games, and conversations which attached Skuldfrið more and more to Tage and Aberney. Three years had thus elapsed. In the spring of the fourth, Aberney and Aunt Sara came alone. Tage had, according to Aberney's desire, gone to Sweden to fit himself at Carlberg for a naval officer.

Thus three years passed without Skuldfrið's seeing the dear friend of her childhood.

Skuldfrið was now seventeen. The pretty child had become a beautiful maiden, retaining the same fresh, glad mind and ingenuous heart. Brought up in complete solitude, she still possessed nothing of the shyness of seclusion or its melancholy dreaminess. If she sometimes dreamed when she sang her songs, it was a smiling dream, fresh and natural as her whole being, or proud and daring as her character, but never sickly or despondent.

Glad as the lark, she hurried to Junta one beautiful day in the beginning of May. She had, through some lines from Aberney, been apprised of his arrival there. Her good friend was in the highest degree surprised when he saw his

protégée again, and found her developed during these last months into a woman. The look that he fastened upon her showed that the learned man, although engrossed in his studies, could yet be surprised by an uncommon beauty.

Aunt Sara, whose especial favorite Skuldfrið had become, treated her to all the delicacies which the pantry could offer in the way of preserves and cakes; and the young girl was yet so much of a child in heart and soul, that she relished heartily all the good things Sara set before her.

The first and also the second visit to Junta was entirely taken up with accounts of how the winter had passed, and all the events of greater or less importance, which had deviated in the smallest way from the daily order. Seated upon the front steps, she told her good friend, as she still called Aberney, that she had woven a long web; that she had spun so and so much yarn, what books she had read, what music she had practised, how many times she had been to church, what beautiful flowers she had raised, and how many more pairs of doves she now possessed. When the account of all these important affairs was ended, she added, —

"I have also learned to ride on horseback."

"To ride on horseback!" repeated Sara, and looked up amazed from her knitting. "It is not possible; that does not become a proper young girl. In my youth no one would have thought of such a thing. It is only very aristocratic ladies who can without reproach undertake such unwomanly performances."

"If an aristocratic lady can ride on horseback without compromising herself, then I can do it too, for what is proper for one is for another." Skuldfrið looked at Aunt Sara with a smiling and defiant air. "Annika there at home," continued she, "came near having a stroke when she for the first time saw me on horse-

back. She ran home to mamma to complain, but gained nothing by it. I obtained full permission of my mother to tumble about on my nag." Skuldfrið laughed.

Aunt Sara smoothed her apron very excitedly, a sign that the old lady was in a bad humor. Aberney took the word with a true Professor's manner.

"Dear child, it seems to me that you ought to let that thing entirely alone. To be a horse-woman is something which by no means adorns one of your sex. It is not at all pleasant to see a young girl, like a Cossack, galloping off on her horse. We men love to admire in her a modest and gentle being, who abhors all that is masculine in her actions."

"Ah, my good friend, such a modest and gentle being I shall never become," rejoined Skuldfrið. "Fear is to me a stranger, and when I do nothing that is wrong, I ought to be able to do whatever I choose. I love motion and freedom. These two advantages I have possessed as far back as I can remember; they have been my treasures, and are so still; therefore I like to fly away on my horse like a whirlwind. God grant that I may have a real riding-horse, but I am not yet so happy."

A little dispute ensued between Skuldfrið and Aberney, in which he was astonished at the young girl's truly superior understanding, the clearness of her thought, and the readiness with which she managed her arguments. This skill, on the whole, was natural, when one considers that Skuldfrið, through the direction she had received in the way of knowledge from Aberney, had obtained a true soul-cultivation, and considerably exercised her naturally good brain.

At her third visit, the lessons were again resumed. If Skuldfrið's voice was fine even in her childhood's years, it had now gained such a strength and clearness, that it could be said she possessed a true nightingale voice.

Two weeks passed quickly for Skuldfrið, who loved her lessons and felt so glad and happy at the side of her fatherly friend. One day Skuldfrið decided to ride to Junta on horseback. She generally used to walk there. Ivar had told her at dinner-time that Bläsen, the best horse of the three that were at Ektorp, was at leisure, if Mademoiselle wanted to use him. Of course Skuldfrið wished it, and the overseer was commissioned to saddle him.

When dinner was over, Skuldfrið went down to the stable. She did not wish to have Annika know that she rode, because the old woman then began to take on about the terror in which Skuldfrið placed her.

Clad in a little short blouse, and trousers of dark home-made cloth, with a round straw hat on her head, Skuldfrið was a very simple, but nevertheless a remarkably beautiful horse-woman. With the horse and saddle it was however otherwise. Herr Bläsen was a light brown little peasant scamp, with a white star on his forehead, a long uncombed mane and short ears. His gear consisted of an old cast-off saddle, which the overseer had stumbled upon at some auction, together with a bridle that had also seen its best days. The reins were of hemp, undoubtedly quite new, but very humble. Yet what did all this signify? The main thing for Skuldfrið was that she could ride: the rest was of no consequence. Glad and proud she sat in the saddle, as if her horse had been a splendid Andalusian courser, and the accoutrements adorned with gold and precious stones. It went away briskly, although peasant-like. When she had gone a little piece, she held in the horse and brought him to a walk. The woods were Skuldfrið's delight, and she always rode slowly through them.

God knows what the young girl thought about, while Herr Bläsen wandered at ease with his burden. Quite

suddenly she was roused from her meditations by the sound of horse's hoofs behind her. Some one came riding at a swift gallop. Bläsen lifted up his head and neighed. Skuldfrið turned and waited with no slight degree of curiosity to see who it could be. She could not remember to have seen any rider in that neighborhood since General Canitz died, three years back. That it was not a peasant-boy, who rode to pasture, could be easily known from the light fall of the hoofs.

"How pleasant," thought Skuldfrið, "to see some stranger; it would be a real epoch."

Scarcely was the thought ended, when a snow-white steed came springing up the little hill which she had left behind her. The horse bore upon his back a slender rider.

Without being in the least frightened at the sight of a young man on horse-back, Skuldfrið allowed Bläsen to continue his moderate peasant pace, and waited impatiently to see the horseman. He was now quite near. Again she turned her head.

At this motion of Skuldfrið's, the rider drew in the reins, just at the moment that his horse would have dashed past. Was it the girl's uncommon beauty, or was it the peculiar aspect of this slender, elegant female figure, clad in so simple a riding-habit, and upon a horse which was destined for a very different purpose from the service he now performed, which made the young man hold in his horse so suddenly, or was it actually the reason he pretended, when he took off his uniform cap, saying, "Excuse me, but allow me to ask, is this the right way to Kronobro?" His eyes were fastened on the young girl with an expression of the greatest surprise.

"No, you have entirely left it, and must now ride on either to the cross-road to Junta, or back to the great high-

way at the end of the wood," answered Skuldfrið, with a high color on her cheeks, but otherwise without any constraint. She had with her hand pointed to the two different directions, one of which he should pursue.

"Then I prefer the forward course," replied the young man with a foreign accent. "I do not willingly turn back when I have taken a road."

"It is, however, sometimes absolutely necessary, for if not we should never return again to the home we have left."

Skuldfrið said this with her usual unaffectedness, without being embarrassed by the stranger's clear and beaming eyes. She was too ignorant of her own beauty to observe that his look expressed undisguised admiration. The young man did not seem at all disposed to continue the way alone, but let his horse keep even pace with Skuldfrið's, resuming the conversation, which he sustained in a lively and original manner that interested irresistibly. Before Skuldfrið was aware of it they had reached the cross-road.

"Here our ways separate," she said, smiling. "Kronobro lies to the right."

"And you, where does your course lead?" asked the stranger.

"To the left, where Junta is situated. If you now ride straight ahead, you will soon find the main road." She bowed her head in adieu.

"Will you permit me a question? Is it to your home that you are now going?"

"No, I am going to visit a friend. Farewell!" Skuldfrið again bowed her head. There was so much dismissal in this motion, that the young man's only answer was to take off his cap, thank her for the pleasure of her company, and gallop away.

Thoughtfully Skuldfrið continued her way. The stranger's fine and handsome features, his proud and yet easy bearing, his deep and penetrating eyes, all had made a lively impression upon Skuldfrið,

especially as there was a certain something in this face that seemed to her familiar.

"Probably he is like some image of my dreams," thought Skuldfrið, smiling; "for in reality I have not seen any other people than peasants, the pastor, Aberney, Tage, and Aunt Sara, besides the folks at home."

That day it went unusually ill with the lessons. Skuldfrið was not attentive to her good friend's expounding of natural history, but interrupted him continually with questions about entirely different subjects. Finally she said, laughing, —

"To-day it would, I think, be more entertaining to hear something about Finland and the last war. Ah, my good friend, the heat is so oppressive that I cannot think."

Aberney looked out of humor, as he had been ever since Skuldfrið's arrival; it was so disagreeable to him to see her on horseback. At this lack of interest he became yet more so. Skuldfrið immediately observed the cloud on his brow, and, leaning her head to one side, said smiling, —

"Uncle, you must not look gloomy if I am now and then inattentive; it comes from the fact that I am seized at times with a longing to speak of this land that has fought and bled in so many conflicts, and which on this account I love so highly, so with my whole heart, that I can never reconcile myself with —"

A hand was placed over Skuldfrið's lips: it was Aunt Sara.

The cloud had meantime disappeared from Aberney's brow, and he began to speak of Finland, which was also dear and precious to him. A visit from the pastor, however, soon interrupted the conversation; and when Aberney became occupied with his guest, Skuldfrið took leave and returned home. While she was riding down to the forest road, Skuldfrið wondered to herself why she had not spoken

to Uncle Aberney of the meeting with the stranger. She could not understand why she had not, and was almost on the point of turning back to correct this fault, when her attention was directed to an object at the cross-road. It was a white horse, which stood tied to a tree. She recognized it immediately.

"Has he not continued his way to Kronobro," asked Skuldfrið mentally, "or why has he left the horse here?"

A manly figure now rose. He had lain hidden by the bushes at the foot of the tree where the horse stood.

Before Skuldfrið had arrived at the spot, he had swung himself into the saddle and was waiting for her.

"Are you angry at my boldness in waiting for you?" asked he with a polite bow and an obliging smile.

"Did you not intend to go to Kronobro?"

"Yes; but upon further reflection I concluded to take the other road you pointed out to me."

"Was it because you could thus ride double the distance?"

"Yes, there are actually moments in our life when we wish to hold time fast and double the way we have to travel."

"You said, however, that you did not willingly turn back."

"That is true, but I do not turn back, I only continue my course. Besides, there is so much in circumstances which makes us change conduct. It is only principle which should remain."

Without waiting for any further permission, he rode beside Skuldfrið.

"When one first visits Finland," said he in the course of conversation, "its nature has something appalling in its deep woods, its marshes, and its rocks; it is a country that is not inviting to any but a native."

"It is because you do not know this land with its wealth of lakes and grand scenery. Ah, in my eyes it is beautiful and dear!"

"You were born and educated here. If Finland was never so ugly it has still the right to be proud of its beautiful daughters."

"Say rather of its brave sons. Its men are like the rocks with which they have grown, strong and courageous."

The young man smiled when he answered, —

"So we all think of our countrymen. Every nation considers itself the best."

"Possibly; but it is history that in this respect pronounces the verdict. A people who have fought and conquered heroically for independence are in character a great people."

"Such as the Finns," said the stranger almost ironically.

"Yes, the Finnish people are great in character," replied Skuldfrið with flaming cheeks, and looked proudly at the stranger.

"I do not know your people, but I willingly believe what such beautiful lips say, especially when it is uttered with so much enthusiasm. You ought not to forget, however, that Finland is now a Russian principality. It has not always issued victorious from the strife."

"It was not conquered, but betrayed. Against force the Finns would have fought to the last man; but against guile and treason no heroism can prevail."

"So young, and already so at home in serious subjects, that you defend your nation warmly."

The stranger's interest had considerably increased.

"Is it actually necessary to be old and to have great knowledge in order to love one's native land? Every peasant cherishes the same feeling. The love of country is innate with us."

"Possibly, but it is an instinct which all do not possess. I know men who regard the whole world as their country."

"These must be very few."

"Do you think so?" said the stranger, and smiled in a peculiar manner. "I be-

long unhappily to those few who do not recognize any country."

"I pity you," said Skuldfrið, and gave her horse a slight cut with the willow branch which she used for a riding-whip.

Bläsen trotted off a little faster.

"Why do you ride so poor a horse?" exclaimed the stranger involuntarily, when he contemplated Bläsen's peasant gallop.

"For the simple reason that I do not possess any better," answered Skuldfrið, laughing, and without the least embarrassment.

"Who has taught you to ride?"

"Our overseer and I myself. You think undoubtedly that I am a very poor horse-woman; but that is of little consequence, as I ride only because I find it amusing. Ah, I should like to fly like the wind!"

"Indeed! And yet you ride so slowly."

"Through the woods, yes! Here I wish to listen to the sigh of the forest-maidens, which rustles through the trees, and to the song of the birds; it is so good for me to be here."

A little pause ensued. Skuldfrið had again allowed her horse to walk, and seemed for some moments to forget that she was not alone. The stranger broke the silence.

"You reside here in the vicinity?"

"Yes, I was brought up here."

They were now upon a little eminence, and through an opening in the woods was seen a beautiful lake, and on its banks a country place. Skuldfrið pointed to the latter, adding, —

"There is my home, Ektorp."

"Ah!" A slight cloud passed over the stranger's broad and clear brow, as if an unpleasant recollection forced itself upon him.

"You are probably a traveller who visits Finland for the first time?" resumed Skuldfrið, without remarking the change in his countenance.

"Yes, I am a stranger and am staying for the present at Kronobro."

"At Kronobro! The owner has then returned? He has, God be thanked, not been here for several years."

"Why do you say, God be thanked?"

"Because — because he is a Russian," answered Skuldfrið. "I thank God for every such one that is not in Finland."

The stranger's countenance darkened, and there was a peculiar tone in his voice when he replied, —

"You are inconsiderate, and forget entirely that I am a stranger."

"Ah no; but of what use can it be to you to put an ill construction upon my words? I have only said what I think, and that can never be a crime."

"Sometimes; for example, if I were a Russian."

"You!"

Skuldfrið drew in her horse so suddenly, that Herr Bläsen, utterly unused to such motions, gave a quick start sideways and threw his rider from the saddle. The stranger immediately jumped to the ground, and bent to lift up Skuldfrið. Bläsen, who felt himself free, followed his longing after the stable, and set off homeward at full speed. The stranger's horse, on the contrary, stood as still as a lamb, while his master raised up Skuldfrið.

"How are you, have you injured yourself?" asked he with sympathy.

A strange play of fate had so willed it that they were now upon the same place where Constantin, six years before, had ill-treated Tage and Skuldfrið.

"I cannot step with one foot, I must have sprained it," answered Skuldfrið, who upon attempting to stand became deadly pale from pain.

"With a strong arm the stranger carried Skuldfrið to a grassy bank, where he seated her.

"This mischance of yours I shall have upon my conscience," said he. "How is it with the foot?" added he gently. "Will you not remain here until I can ride to your home and get a carriage; or if you can mount my horse, I will then

accompany you on foot. You see that it is impossible for you to walk."

"Well, then I prefer to use your horse. You are more than kind to offer it so chivalrously." Skuldfrið smiled.

"But you must not remain here longer, for your foot requires speedy help, and before I can go to Kronobro for the physician, there will be yet more delay."

"Physician!" exclaimed Skuldfrið, frightened. "No, for God's sake, do not send for any doctor. They will take care of me at home without him."

The word "physician" recalled to her remembrance the only time she had been under the care of one.

"And make it worse. As probably they would."

He bent down to lift up Skuldfrið, but she pushed back his arm gently, saying, —

"I have many times been sprained and made myself ill, but only once have I been in need of a doctor; promise therefore not to send one to me."

"I promise nothing; but I say decidedly, you must not stay here longer."

Before Skuldfrið had time to make any further objections, she was lifted from the ground upon the back of the horse.

"Does the foot pain you badly?" asked he.

Skuldfrið was not able to speak a word, the pain was so violent; neither did he wait for any answer, but took the horse by the reins, and thus brought the poor girl to Ektorps. Not a word was exchanged between them. At the gate Skuldfrið asked him to stop and help her down from the saddle. She seated herself upon a little bench which stood there, saying, when he would have assisted her across the yard, —

"No, let me stay here. When you are gone, I will call for assistance."

"Why do you not allow me to support you across the yard?"

"My mother does not love to see strangers," answered Skuldfrið.

He looked at her for several minutes, as if hesitating whether to obey or not. Then he took off his cap, made a respectful bow, and took leave with the words, "Adieu, may your foot soon be well!" And before Skuldfrid had time to stammer forth any thanks, he had sprung upon his horse and hurried away at wild speed. She looked after him with a mournful glance. It seemed to her as if the bulfinch that sat twittering in the tree over her head had been relating all manner of sorrowful things. A strange, uneasy, and anxious feeling filled Skuldfrid's otherwise so calm breast, and a sad foreboding whispered to her that the accident with the foot was an unlucky omen. At length, when she no longer saw the retreating rider, she began to call, and in a moment Annika was seen in the door of the kitchen. As a high lilac-bush hid Skuldfrid's seat, the old servant could not find her, and it was only after repeated cries that she found the place from whence the sounds proceeded.

"What has come over you, to scream so dreadfully?" muttered Annika.

"Dear Annika, I have sprained my foot, and I cannot stir a step," answered Skuldfrid.

"Lord, my Creator, what is that you say? Have you hurt yourself? And how you look! Triggled out like a vagabond. Now I understand, you have been off riding. That girl, that girl, she never will give up until she is ruined." Here Annika broke off abruptly, for Skuldfrid's cheeks grew pale.

"Peter, Peter," screamed Annika to a man-servant who just then came up; "carry up Mamsell, she has ruined her foot."

Annika went ahead, grumbling to herself, and Peter followed after with Skuldfrid, whom he carried up to her chamber, at Annika's command.

The foot was bared and found to be swollen. Annika bathed it with brandy, while she and Skuldfrid deliberated how

they should avoid saying anything to Fru Smidt, at least that night. In spite of all Annika's laudable efforts, the foot ached worse and worse, and she became perfectly inconsolable when she could not put it in place.

"I suppose it is best, dear heart, for Ivar or Peter to ride to Kronobro for the Doctor," said Annika. Just then a carriage was heard which stopped at the gate. This was something so extraordinary, that Annika, in spite of her anxiety, ran from the afflicted Skuldfrid to the window.

"A strange gentleman, and that in the midst of this misery!" exclaimed she and hastened out. In the hall she met the new arrival, a middle-aged man with a very prepossessing appearance. Annika immediately recognized Dr. Wagner.

"I have been told that Mademoiselle Smidt has sprained her ankle," said the Doctor.

Annika stared at him, and in her head arose ghostly ideas of forest spirits, who must have served as messengers. Who else could have sent for the Doctor, and how explain naturally that he came just as she desired his aid. When she did not answer, Wagner resumed, —

"Is it possible that some one has played a joke on me, and that Mademoiselle Smidt is not in need of my assistance?"

"Yes, that she certainly is; but it is so strange, it is, it is." Annika courtesied and courtesied, and at last conducted the Doctor up to Skuldfrid.

He saluted his patient with exquisite politeness, who at the sight of him changed color. The Doctor examined the injured foot, which was found to be entirely out of joint. He asked Skuldfrid to excuse him for being obliged to pain her. Skuldfrid however endured the pain with wonderful fortitude, and without a word of complaint. The Doctor then ordered some wet bandages.

When the physician's carriage rolled away, Fru Smidt came walking slowly from the garden. The six years which had fled had still more deeply imprinted the marks of sorrow on her features. Her whole countenance seemed petrified with grief. When she entered the porch she called to Annika, who came down at once from Skuldfrið's room.

"It seemed to me that I heard the sound of a carriage," said Fru Smidt. "Has any stranger been here?"

"Yes, the Doctor from Kronobro," replied Annika, quite boldly.

"What did he come here for?"

"Why you see, Skuldfrið —"

"Skuldfrið, Skuldfrið," repeated Fru Smidt, and took a step towards Annika, "what has happened to her?"

"She has sprained her foot. It is nothing dangerous, the Doctor has now put it in place."

Without hearing anything further, Fru Smidt went up to her daughter. Annika murmured, —

"God be thanked that she did not ask how the Doctor came here, for that I could not have told her."

We will now visit Kronobro. The great mansion has been deserted ever since the General died there three years ago. Constantin, at the time of his father's death, was on a naval expedition. After an interval of six years, the young owner arrived quite suddenly at his paternal estate, accompanied by two Russian noblemen, who were passionately fond of hunting.

The main structure at Kronobro consisted of a square building with two large wings. General Canitz had the rooms fitted up and furnished with princely magnificence. There was heaped all the luxury which marked the taste of the rich Russian. The house, with its marble pillars and balconies, formed an

actual palace. The largest saloon of the first floor, situated in the middle of the building and extending through it, with windows to the floor and glass doors opening upon the balcony, can serve as a specimen of the arrangement of the whole. The hangings were of gray damask silk, with flowers inwoven in crimson and silver. The mirrors between the windows were framed in silver, inlaid with the most beautiful crystals and other stones. The furniture, also silvered, was covered with the same material as the hangings; one large and four smaller silver chandeliers, with red glass, were suspended from the ceiling; and in each corner of the saloon stood marble groups, bearing silver candelabras.

Upon the same evening that Skuldfrið had met the stranger, the young owner of Kronobro lay on one of the many small sofas in the saloon. The glass doors stood open and the balmy fragrance from the garden was wafted in.

Lothard Constantin Canitz was at this time about twenty-two, with an exceedingly advantageous appearance. The high, broad forehead was so free and open, that it seemed as if it could not be shadowed by any cloud. The large, deep-set dark eyes had a blended expression of intelligence, mildness, fire, passion, and daring. The form of his face was a pure oval, the nose finely formed, the mouth small with dazzlingly white teeth; dark hair and whiskers enclosed the face as in a frame.

For the moment Constantin seemed to be tormented by unpleasant thoughts. Now and then he looked at his watch; and finally, as this could not divert him, he seized a silver bell from a little marble stand near him and rang violently. A servant in green and red livery immediately appeared.

"Has the Doctor returned?" inquired Constantin, in Russian.

"No, not yet," was the answer, given in the same language.

"Tell him as soon as he comes that I am waiting." The same question and direction was uttered now for the sixth time since the Doctor had left Kronobro. When the servant, after a deep bow, had left the room, Constantin began to pace the floor in a visibly impatient state of mind. At last he stopped by one of the open glass doors and looked out into space. Far in the distance was seen the sea. The sun leaned his glowing cheek against its cool, fresh bosom.

Whatever were the reflections which filled the young man's soul, they were soon disturbed by a person's entrance. Constantin turned immediately, and Dr. Wagner came towards him.

"Well, Doctor, how is it?" asked Constantin, in French.

"I have now replaced the joint, but she must keep quiet for two or three weeks without moving at all," said the Doctor with a conciliating smile.

"I promised you as large a compensation as you could wish, if you would only cure it quickly."

"Herr Baron, my art can only assist nature. We physicians are not gods."

"No, that I am well aware of; and truly I cannot see what your art is good for, when nature has to do the greatest part." Constantin threw himself on a little sofa, which he had pushed up to the open glass door.

"It serves to put a sprained foot in joint, to splinter an arm that has been broken, to heal wounds which one has received, to —"

"Ah ha! you have a good memory, I perceive. Do you know, Doctor, you are a strange combination of slyness and boldness, of humble creeping and daring frankness. You are, like all your countrymen, a strange mixture of the rascal and the honest man."

Over the Doctor's smiling countenance flew a threatening expression, but so quickly that it left no trace.

"What you say about me and my

countrymen I dare assert can be said of all. In some corner of our nature there are always seeds to be found of which a rascal can be formed. It depends entirely upon the condition, whether the rascal or the honest man shall prevail."

"Or if they shall go hand in hand, as with you."

"Precisely; but now I must leave you." The Doctor made a deep bow. Constantin held out his hand, saying with a smile, —

"Ah, do not think to escape so easily. Gurtzskow and Brunskowirtz are off hunting. I am consequently alone and desire your company this evening. I have one thing and another to speak to you about; it is now a long time since we conversed confidentially. You will be my society for the rest of the day."

"With the greatest pleasure," answered the Doctor politely, laying aside his hat. He then pushed an easy-chair forward, intending to seat himself, when Constantin said, —

"Be so kind as to ring. We cannot possibly talk without wine and cigars."

When the Doctor pulled the bell-cord, he cast a dark look upon the young man, who treated him with such careless superiority.

Some moments afterwards we find the physician and the owner of Kronobro smoking their cigars and sipping from their glasses some very noble juice of the grape. A long silence had intervened. The Doctor seemed entirely absorbed in contemplating his unusually small feet. Constantin looked thoughtfully at the rings of smoke. His thoughtfulness was genuine, but the Doctor's admiration for his boots was entirely feigned, for he often threw a lurking glance at Constantin. Finally the latter broke the silence. He fastened his penetrating eyes on the Doctor, saying, —

"Have you nothing to relate about your new patient?"

"I have already informed you of her

state of health," replied the Doctor, quite indifferently, without seeming to understand that Constantin wanted him to speak of her.

"See here, do not play simple. Should Wagner's penetration be so at fault that —"

"He did not surmise that quite other feelings than compassion dictated your solicitude for the young girl's misfortune, you mean to say. O, no, I comprehend your desires perfectly as well now as formerly, but I am now silent for the moment, and wait for you to tell me that you found the girl not only beautiful, but irresistibly charming. She is like a magnificent rose, which with its beauty and its fragrance can tempt even a saint to wish to pluck it. And from this comes your interest."

"So." Constantin smiled almost scornfully. "You then believe me unable to feel pity, unless it has its source in my selfishness."

"Belief, Herr Baron, does not come in question. I am fully convinced that it is so; yet it was not of this that you desired to speak with me, but of the beautiful maiden down there at Ektorp."

"You are right. What I am, how much good or evil there is within me, no one yet knows, not even I myself, and least of all you."

A pause ensued.

"Did you see the girl's mother?" asked Constantin.

"No, only the old servant."

"Do you know anything about the inmates of Ektorp?"

"O yes, as much as of all others in this vicinity, and perhaps a little more. So, for instance, I know that this girl, who has captivated you through her beauty, is the same child that you abused six years ago."

"Indeed! In truth I feared it." Constantin looked troubled. "And, moreover, I thought that I recognized in those beautiful features the face of the

child when she lay senseless, and you forced me to fly."

"Further, I know that the mother lives a completely isolated life. She associates with no one, never goes out except to church, which occurs three times a year, and receives no visits besides the pastor's. In this seclusion she has educated her beautiful daughter, who has been allowed to grow up without any restraint, in habit and manner a child of nature, but in soul-culture superior to most persons of her age. Besides this, I know, what you perhaps are not aware of, namely, that Fru Smidt has rented Ektorp of the General, your father, for twelve years, and that this lease must now be renewed, or the widow must remove. That matter of course becomes an affair between your steward and the old lady." The Doctor's eyes rested on Constantin with an almost malevolent expression.

"O well, that is a perfectly indifferent matter," rejoined the latter.

"May be; but who knows to what a knowledge of this may serve in future. It is always well to know on what footing we stand with persons for whom we interest ourselves. One's own advantage is the mother of all bonds of affection."

"What an abominable philosophy!"

"Possibly, but yet it is the one we all subscribe to in our actions."

Constantin made a disdainful motion of the shoulders, as if he would indicate that he did not care to reply to this remark.

"Of whom has the girl obtained the unusual education you speak of?"

"Partly from her mother, partly from a neighbor, Professor Aberney, the owner of Junta."

"The father of the boy who so stubbornly tried to defend the girl on that abominable day?"

"The foster-father. The Professor is a bachelor between forty and fifty, stately

in his appearance, and a true Finn in his nature."

"I understand, a bull-head."

"Yes, if you so please to term the immovable firmness, the integrity, and the warm feeling for country, which distinguish the Finnish people."

"When did you, Doctor, become such an admirer of this 'plodding and stiff-necked people'?"

"With your permission, Baron, I do not admire, I only speak of a fact."

"Good! Will you now listen to what I desire, with regard to the girl?"

"Do you really need to tell me that? I think it entirely superfluous. In the first place, you desire that she should not know that you are Constantin Canitz. She may willingly believe you to be Gurtzskow, or any one else, only not the owner of Kronobro; further, you desire through me to bring about a correspondence; and lastly, that I shall reconnoitre the ground, so that you can find out how you can come in contact with the girl."

Constantin sprang up from the sofa, swallowed a whole glass of wine, took a turn round the room, and then stopped before the Doctor, with his arms crossed upon his breast, saying slowly, —

"Have you read the 'Story' of 'how the Devil recruits Souls'?"

"No, I never read stories."

"That is too bad. You would have recognized yourself in it; for he does precisely as you do. He takes a person's most beautiful intentions and turns them into an evil. This is brought about thus: the moment a good resolution is taken, he presents to the human weakness all possible ways to obtain the satisfaction of its passions. So is it with you. When I left the young girl, I determined never to see her again. I sent you there, so that she might be helped immediately, as I considered myself the cause of the misfortune. I desired to remain unknown, so that she might not have any disagreeable remembrance of our short

interview. Finally, I wanted to tell you of my desire to know their pecuniary condition, and that you should inform her that he who occasioned her the pain of the sprained foot has now left the region. All this, upon my faith and honor, was what I intended to do."

"In that case there is yet time to accomplish your laudable and romantic purpose."

Constantin again took a turn in the room, in an apparently disturbed state of mind. The Doctor's glance followed him.

"I wonder," resumed Constantin, stopping at the open glass door, "if my father did not commit a terrible mistake when he made you my tutor. You were the man I loved even to adoration. You possessed an unlimited power over me; and with your superior intelligence you could easily have withheld me from evil, and yet there is scarcely any dissolute or wrong act of my youth which has not sprung from the seeds you have sown."

"If that is so, how can you then call me an honorable man?"

"In your relation to me as teacher I have never called you honorable; it is just there that you are a rascal."

"And yet it was you who procured me the place I now occupy."

"I procured it for you for two reasons. First, because you as my tutor had spent time which you might have turned to better advantage. I stood in a great debt to you, which could not easily be requited. The income that you received as my tutor was not sufficient to recompense you for what I cost you. It was my duty to arrange a position for you corresponding to your qualifications."

"As you consider the one I now occupy to be? Why not as well that which your father would have procured me at Princess —?"

"Because you would then have resided in Russia, with a Russian woman, surrounded by all that was most calculated to excite your feeling of hate towards

Poland's oppressors. In Russia the trace of every better instinct would have been effaced. But here, in a land whose people were strangers to the sufferings which have befallen yours, there was nothing which could arouse the slumbering bitterness in your soul. It was Wagner, the honorable man, for whom I procured through my father the post of physician of the district, fully convinced that here was a sufficient field for your activity and philanthropy. These years have shown me that I have not judged you wrongly. You are liked and respected by all, both poor and rich. You have been the friend of the former, the helper of the latter, and filled your place conscientiously as a physician and an individual."

"And yet you just now called me a rascal," said the Doctor, with his plastic smile.

"Yes, and I do it still; for the life-philosophy you inculcate is that of a rascal. The skill with which you have played upon the strings of my inner nature, so that you aroused my passions prematurely, has been that of a villain; and if I am not to-day a completely ruined young man, with a heart grown dry through dissipation, no credit is due you; the honor must be ascribed to my natural qualities, as well as to the circumstance that for several years I have lived apart from the sneaking, poisonous influence of your teachings." Constantin ceased.

Dr. Wagner did not seem disposed to continue the conversation. He smoked his cigar quite indifferently, and let the young Baron remain undisturbed in the meditations into which he was plunged. Suddenly Constantin turned round to the Doctor.

"Why have you wished to make of me a morally miserable man? Why have you with every temptation pointed out the means by which I could satisfy my ignoble desires? You have done everything to make me give way." Constantin's voice was irritated.

"Herr Baron, you are excited and see everything in a wrong light, or you would perceive that I have only acted according to the views which I hold. I am a stranger to all those prejudices which are laws to the masses, and in my treatment of you I have not allowed these to intervene. I hold the conviction that a young man should possess the knowledge of all conditions of life, in order to obtain a true view of life itself. He must taste of pleasure's foaming cup, to learn his weakness and his strength. My philosophy is this, that we should enjoy our existence. If this view is not right, you may pity, but not accuse me; it is mine, and any other I could not teach."

"Your life is not by any means a series of intoxicating joys, but exceedingly irreproachable."

"Why? Because my enjoyments are of a different order from those of other people. I love wine, but only in moderation. I have not yet found any woman who is to me enticing. The result of this is, that I do not abandon myself to the pleasures of either wine or love. I have one master passion, that is my studies. To them I devote myself, and enjoy them with full draughts. My calling of physician is dear to me. This is the reason why I cultivate it with care. If it did not give me joy, I should be careless and indifferent; for we only do well that which pleases us. I yield without restraint to everything that can make life agreeable. The fault, Herr Baron, is not mine that Nature has given me fewer means of enjoyment than she has bestowed upon you."

A short silence again ensued, when the Doctor changed the subject and managed so as to engage Constantin's interest, and he seemed to have forgotten their previous conversation.

Few persons possess a greater capacity of interesting and fascinating with their eloquence than Dr. Wagner, and just this made him so dangerous when he ad-

vanced sophisms highly pernicious to mind and morals.

The two gentlemen took a light supper. It was past midnight when the Doctor took his hat to go home. He occupied the left wing, which in itself was a stately mansion.

Constantin reached the Doctor his hand in farewell, and the latter had gone nearly to the door without Constantin's uttering a word about his visit to Skuldfrið the following day. The Doctor took good care not to drop a syllable upon the subject. Just as he laid his hand on the knob, Constantin said with affected indifference, —

"At what time to-morrow do you visit your young patient?"

"Quite early in the morning," was the answer. Another bow, a turning of the knob, and the Doctor had disappeared.

Constantin remained standing in the middle of the floor, looking towards the door. He muttered to himself, —

"What satanic thoughts and desires has not that demon awakened in my breast! Ah, what a miserable tool shall I not become in the hands of that man! But am I actually then the weak character who allows himself to be ruled by the passions which another excites? Ah! I do not know myself what I am before some strong and powerful feeling takes possession of my soul and grasps my heart-strings. Hitherto I have not experienced any of those inner forces which make us mortals either great or paltry. I have never had parents, never a home, have never known love either for father or mother; never had a friend, and, what is still worse, never a fatherland. With a father who was recreant to his country, and a mother whom I never knew, my very blood is mixed; and not even instinct holds me by preference either to country or home. I belong to a nation that I despise; I serve a monarch that I abhor; my whole position is calculated to call forth this chaos of good and evil

within me, which has hitherto marked my character. I, the rich and powerful Canitz, am truly poor and to be pitied, for at twenty-two years of age I am tired of life and possess nothing but a fortune, with which I can purchase everything except true friends, parents, a country, and happiness. Affluence can procure excitements and afford an opportunity of gratifying our caprices, but cannot give us a single moment's felicity."

The next morning, while the Doctor was drinking his coffee, Constantin entered his pleasant and elegant abode. Wagner was sitting in a large library, whose walls were covered with bookcases well filled. At seeing Constantin he rose immediately, and greeted him with exquisite politeness, saying, "To what am I indebted for so early a visit from the Baron?" Within himself he thought, "I was sure that he would be here before my departure, and I can venture my life upon it, that he brings a letter with him and a commission to give it to the girl."

"I wished to see you, Doctor, before you drove to Ektorp, to invite you to dine with me to-day," said Constantin.

"For this invitation, I am particularly grateful. As soon as I come home from my visits to the sick, I shall have the honor to present myself."

Constantin spoke of some indifferent matters, and took his departure, to the no little surprise of the Doctor, who expected a confidential charge.

"What was his actual intention in this visit?" Wagner queried to himself. "His invitations to dinner are generally delivered by some of the servants; consequently this was but a pretext. Could he, the wealthy and proud Canitz, come to Wagner in person merely to bring an invitation? Impossible." The Doctor

laughed in scorn, and resumed his place at the breakfast-table. When he took the coffee-cup, he observed a letter which lay near. It was addressed to him.

"Aha!" said the Doctor, with a sardonic smile. "Now his politeness is explained." He weighed the letter in his hand, and held the following monologue in thought, —

"What can this contain? Let us think upon it: yes, some phrases to the effect that my words have aroused his lower nature, etc.; and so at last he asks me to carry a greeting or a billet to the girl whom I am tending. Bah! The poor fellow has not even strength enough in his soul to be a profligate wretch, without blaming others for it." The Doctor's smile changed suddenly, and took a stamp of implacable hate, while he continued, "You deceive yourself, effeminate youth, when you think that I only wish to throw you into the arms of dissipation. No, I desire your ruin; I wish to make of your life a chain of afflictions and crimes, which shall lacerate your soul with the tortures of remorse, when your proud heart awakes to the consciousness of having degraded yourself. What is there that you might suffer that could be compared to the evil which your family has heaped upon mine!"

He rose hastily and broke the seal of the letter. It contained a little note addressed to Mademoiselle Smidt, and these lines to Wagner, —

"You have offered to be my letter-carrier. Therefore, my dear Doctor, I do not wound you with the commission. Leave the enclosed letter with its owner, but in such a way that she does not find it until you are gone."

"No accusations?" murmured the Doctor. "So much the better." He put the letter in his pocket. "I knew your weak mind too well not to be aware that you would fasten upon the hook I threw out."

A quarter of an hour afterwards the Doctor's carriage rolled away to Ektorp.

Upon the sofa, which stood opposite the window in Skuldfrid's room, lay the young girl, gazing sadly at the leaves of the trees which nodded in the wind, and the waves of the lake rolling slowly away from the shore. Both windows were open, and the light summer breeze came into the young maiden's bower, laden with perfumes.

Fru Smidt had spent the whole night with her daughter, but in the morning left her, because Annika expected the Doctor, and the shy widow did not wish to meet any stranger.

Annika had fussed about the child, brought in flowers, adorned the sofa with fresh boughs, and did everything she could, so that her little savage should not suffer too much from her imprisonment.

Skuldfrid was extremely absent, and gave no heed to these thousand small attentions through which the old servant displayed her affection for her. It was plain to be seen that something troubled her. Finally, Annika could not refrain from asking, —

"But good Lord, dear child, does the foot pain you so badly, or what is the matter with you? It is just as if you lay with your head in an ant-hill, so do you turn and twist it, and you do not see how nicely I have dressed the room. Tell me now what it is that makes the child so uneasy?" Annika patted Skuldfrid's cheek with her brown and horny hand.

"O, dear Annika, it is not the pain in my foot that troubles me, but it is the annoyance of not being able to see my good friend Uncle Aberney. I should like so much to send a letter to him, but I do not know how to manage it. This disturbs my mind."

"Hm! hm!" said Annika, but had

not time to continue, for now the Doctor arrived. Wagner's visit was longer this time than the day previous, and his manner was less ceremonious and more cordial. He talked about the country, about Finland and the Finnish people, and succeeded with his agreeable manner and ease of expression in inspiring Skuldfrið with more confidence than hitherto. When he rose to take leave, he said, —

"Now I have chatted away a whole hour with you, but my conscience is not troubled by it. While your foot keeps you confined to your couch, you have sufficient time left for meditation."

Annika followed him out. When in the hall she said, courtesying, —

"I beg your pardon, Herr Doctor, but I would like to ask you a question."

"Willingly."

"How did you learn that Skuldfrið had sprained her foot?"

"That matter is very simple. I was on my way home, when a young man hailed me and said that the young lady at Ektorp had hurt herself, whereupon I immediately rode here."

"Ah! Then it was actually a direction of Providence," said Annika.

"Or of the powers of darkness," muttered the Doctor, as he stepped into his carriage.

On the table near Skuldfrið lay a book which she had been reading. When the Doctor was gone, she took it up again. At this motion the book opened of itself, and behold, there lay an elegant note addressed to Mademoiselle Smidt. At this sight, a deep blush spread over Skuldfrið's cheeks, and she closed the book involuntarily. Just then Annika entered, inquiring if Skuldfrið needed anything, otherwise she would go and talk to her mistress about a matter of importance. When the young girl was again alone, she opened the book quite slowly, and turned the letter over and over with an undecided air, while she thought, —

"Who can this be from? And how has it come here?" Her heart beat quite anxiously, and the letter was again laid back. "You must not open it," said reason. "What harm can there be in it?" whispered curiosity. The letter was again taken up, turned, examined, and finally, without Skuldfrið's really knowing how it came about, it was opened. The curious and eager eyes read the following: —

"When I left you yesterday it was my firm intention never to see you again, because I accused myself of having been the cause of the accident that occurred. And moreover, I saw in this mischance a warning sign of destiny, which has certainly appointed me to occasion you some pain or sorrow. This I wanted to prevent, by avoiding all contact with the one who even upon our first acquaintance experienced suffering. In spite of all these indications, you receive this letter from me. My resolution of yesterday has thus tumbled to-day. And yet I do not know how myself; I only know that I should be thankful all my life if I could obtain your forgiveness for the annoyance I have caused by intruding myself upon you."

Skuldfrið read this note over and over again, which was without any signature. What was there in its contents that fascinated and affected her so agreeably? She could not have told herself; but away went all restlessness and impatience; and when Annika again came into the room, she was quite surprised at Skuldfrið's calm and smiling appearance.

"Why, how pleasant you look! Well, well, I also come with good news. Your mother has given Ivar permission to ride over to Junta, and tell the Professor that you have sprained your ankle."

Skuldfrið made such a sudden motion in her joy, that her foot began to ache; but that did not prevent her from hugging and embracing Annika so heartily, that the old servant smiled good-humoredly upon her.

Skuldfrið wrote the letter and Ivar set off with it. When Fru Smidt came in to her daughter, the latter stretched out both arms towards her, saying with the vivacity of her age, —

“You good, you beloved mamma, to let me send to Junta. Now Uncle Aberney will certainly write some word to me. O, how thankful I am!”

Fru Smidt smiled in her mournful way, patted the young girl's head, and seated herself by the window without uttering a word. She was so placed that Skuldfrið saw her face in profile. With her head bent over her work, it seemed as if her features had been cut in marble, so lifeless did they appear. The sallow complexion, the silver-white hair, the straight nose, and the tightly compressed lips, all had an almost ghostly aspect. She plied her needle quite mechanically, without once looking up. An unspeakable oppression fell upon Skuldfrið's mind just now so joyous, and a deep compassion filled her heart. She thought, —

“What grief is it that has furrowed my mother's countenance so ineffaceably? What dark and bitter memories can there be that hold her soul in an eternal sorrow? O my God, how painful it is to contemplate this face, and read in it sufferings which can never be mitigated. Is there then no joy for this woman who is so good, so tender, so worthy of admiration? She resembles a martyr, and, like such, she almost inspires reverence. One feels that an immeasurable distance lies between her and all others, and just for this reason none dare approach her.”

Skuldfrið sighed so deeply, that Fru Smidt raised her head quickly and looked at her.

“What is the matter my child, do you suffer pain?” asked she.

“O no, mamma, it was something that troubled me.” Skuldfrið extended her hands to her mother. “Come and sit here. It seems to me when I see you

sitting so far away from me, as if the distance between us was infinite.”

Fru Smidt got up and took a seat by her daughter. She passed her hand caressingly over the beautiful head, saying with her indescribably sorrowful smile, —

“The distance between you and me is indeed immense. You are the fresh and smiling spring, which knows not of the autumn's storms. I” — she pressed her daughter's head to her breast — “am the winter. My life is the night, while yours is a bright and sunny spring morning. Ah, may it always continue so! May no shadow of my dark fate fall upon the path of your life!” Fru Smidt kissed her daughter's brow.

“Then your life, mother, has been very unhappy?” Skuldfrið looked at her mother with a peculiarly timid and yet searching glance. The latter's countenance grew dark, and she replied in a gloomy tone, —

“Child, never try to search into your mother's past life. It would be death to me and misfortune to yourself.” She rose to leave her daughter, but Skuldfrið detained her.

“Forgive me if I have grieved you; but you do not imagine how I feel when my eyes rest on your face, and I reflect that as long back as I can remember it has been just so sad; that it has never been brightened by any smile of happiness or satisfaction. O my beloved mother, I am your child, let me now become your friend, the one who shall share the burden of your sorrows; they will then surely become less heavy.”

Skuldfrið twined her arms around her mother's neck, and looked at her with a tender and beseeching glance. Fru Smidt pressed the young girl to her bosom, and said with an unusually clear and calm voice, —

“Yes, you are my *Skuldfrið* (guilt-peace), and therefore do I desire that the dark sides of life shall remain unknown

to you. Do you see the flower in the window, how beautifully it blooms, how rich its colors, and how luxuriant the leaves that surround it? Well, the soil, its mother, is black; but the flower does not ask why it wears mourning. Do you likewise. Enjoy the sunbeams, the western breeze, and all that can gladden and rejoice your young heart; but do not ask why your mother's hair has turned gray prematurely, and her cheeks become furrowed by grief, or why her happiness has fled. These inquiries would change the morning of your life into a sombre night."

There was something solemnly and yet affectionately warning in her voice. A pause succeeded. Skuldfriid had become so strangely impressed, that she did not venture to interrupt the silence by a word. Fru Smidt resumed, after a long pause, —

"When your eyes rest on my gloomy countenance, then think that God, who reads the heart, is also just, and that he does not allow grief to consume any life, unless the one who suffers is deserving of it. Do not let your innocent eyes dwell on my sombre face, but lift them to the heavens. Whatever my inner griefs are, I still possess one *treasure*, I *have you*. You are my beautiful flower, which I, like the earth, have nourished and fostered in my bosom. The sunlight has caressed your innocent cheeks; and God has been merciful to me, as he allowed me to keep you."

"Mother, how meek and submissive you are! O, if I could once become so!"

At these words Fru Smidt started and looked with trembling anguish at her daughter; then she kissed her brow hastily and murmured, —

"God preserve you, child, from becoming such as I!"

She left the room quickly.

When Ivar returned from Junta, he brought a message that the Professor intended to come over in the afternoon. At this intelligence Skuldfriid cried aloud with joy; but a moment after, she looked quite anxiously at Annika, as if she expected to learn of her how it could possibly take place that a stranger should pay a visit to Ektorp.

"Ah, dear child, you must understand that I managed that affair when I got your mother's permission to send to Junta."

"What affair?" asked Skuldfriid, who did not in the least believe in Annika's capacity to guess her thoughts.

"Why, what nonsense you talk! I see well enough, that you are afraid your mother will take it ill when the Professor comes."

"Yes, that is true. I am afraid that —"

"You are a little goose to think that Annika has no more judgment than a sparrow. But be easy, your dear Professor shall be allowed to come in; that matter I have attended to."

Annika went out, and Skuldfriid was seized with an actual respect for her judgment, — a thing which she had never before recognized that Annika possessed.

Skuldfriid counted the hours until the afternoon came, and then she listened intently to every sound, until at length the rumbling of wheels reached her ear. Now it was too hard to be forced to lie still, without hastening to meet the dearly welcome guest. At last the door opened, and with a glad cry Skuldfriid stretched her arms towards him who entered.

An inexpressibly friendly smile played upon Aberney's lips as he saw the joy which beamed in the young girl's face.

"I ought to be angry," said he jestingly, "and you richly merit a reproof for your temerity. What did I say to you about riding?"

He took both her hands and pressed them heartily.

"No reproofs," exclaimed Skuldfrið, and carried the hand of her beloved instructor to her lips. "Am I not sufficiently punished when I must abstain from going out, from roaming around, or visiting Junta? Now, I need my friend to comfort me. Ah, Uncle, you do not know how much I think of you! How the thought of not being able to see you pained me! If you knew that, then you would understand that the punishment I endure is much too severe."

A strange feeling moved Aberney's breast when he heard Skuldfrið's artless expression of her affection and regret. He, who during the whole term of his manhood had stood so alone, now possessed two young warm hearts that were attached to him with true and unfeigned regard.

However deep a person plunges in study, the heart still craves its nourishment; and there are moments when it seems so desolate to stand alone with all one's learning, without a human being to love or be loved by. Aberney at this moment felt happier and more satisfied than he had been during his whole previous life. Full of emotion he pressed a kiss upon Skuldfrið's brow with the words, —

"Thanks, my child, for the feeling your heart bestows upon me! Be assured that you will always possess in me a faithful friend, however destiny may shape itself for us."

From that day Aberney came to Ektorp every afternoon. When Skuldfrið was a little better, he used to carry her out into the garden.

The Doctor visited his patient every morning, and generally lingered to converse with Skuldfrið on subjects which he thought would interest her. Faithful as a sentinel, Annika sat in the room during the Doctor's visits. She did not consider

it proper for the physician to be left alone with "the child." Wagner did not seem at all disturbed by the old servant's presence, but acted as if she had not existed. He often brought valuable books with him for Skuldfrið. At every book he gave her she blushed, especially when he added with an engaging smile, "Here is a work which ought to interest *you*." She was then certain to find a letter in it or some written lines that expressed either anxiety or sympathy.

At Aberney's first visit Skuldfrið had firmly resolved to tell him about her meeting with the stranger, and also to show him the letter she had received in the morning; but every time she opened her mouth to relate this remarkable event, the blood rushed to her cheeks, and it became in the highest degree distasteful to her to speak of it. When Skuldfrið, two days after the Doctor's first visit, again received a billet, she became disturbed. She felt a great need of having some one to confide in, and she then resolved to tell her mother all about it; but when Fru Smidt entered and Skuldfrið saw the melancholy countenance, the same inscrutable feeling of fear seized her that she had experienced ever since childhood. It was impossible for her to speak freely and confidentially with her mother. So she again locked up the occurrence with the stranger, and then another feeling arose which always accompanies a secret: she began to reason within herself, that there was no harm in a person's writing to her, and that this matter did not concern any one but herself. Never had her mother, Annika, or Aberney, designated as a wrong the act of one person's sending a letter to another. And had not Tage for several years written to Skuldfrið, and she to him? Why then need she feel troubled, that the stranger in this way wished to inform himself about her health? The result of this reasoning was, that Skuldfrið, without any further scruples, read

every line she received, and soon she longed for them, although the notes often contained only these words, —

“When will your foot allow you to walk again? This is my first question when I awake, and the last when I retire to rest.”

Or another time, —

“I wonder if you are much embittered against me?” Or else: “Shall you never let a couple of lines from your hand remain in some of the books that are returned here?”

However poor in contents these billets were, Skuldfrið yet read them many, many times. There was something inexplicably magical, which in a peculiarly agreeable manner charmed and fascinated the young girl's imagination. But for all this, she had never for an instant felt tempted to send any answer. Her highly original education and complete ignorance of conventional requirements would have made her answer the letters had she felt so disposed, without seeing in it anything blameworthy. Now it seemed to her that she would completely destroy the enchantment of these written revelations if she wrote a single syllable in reply.

Thus two weeks had elapsed. In the forenoon the Doctor's visit, with the accompanying billets, which were always found after the Doctor had left; in the afternoon Aberney and the lesson with him; in the evening singing or conversation till eight o'clock, at which time Aberney left Ektorp and his pupil, as he called Skuldfrið.

In the third week the Doctor said his patient might try to walk with the support of Annika's arm and a cane. When Aberney came that day, he found Skuldfrið sitting in the court-yard.

“Now, my dear, good friend, I am allowed to begin to walk,” she cried to him. “Give me your arm, Uncle, and let us walk outside the gate to the birch grove.”

Laughing, and gay as a bird that has escaped from the cage, Skuldfrið went out through the gate, leaning on Aberney's arm. She walked along with him so slowly, that she said at last, with merry impatience, —

“O, this is too much like a turtle's progress, we must go a little faster!”

“Very well, but then it might happen that your foot would pain you again. One who wishes to enjoy life must do it with moderation, or else become bankrupt.”

“Then you, Uncle, will surely never become bankrupt,” declared Skuldfrið.

“No, and for two reasons.” Aberney looked thoughtful.

“Let me hear them.”

“First, because I have had so little joy; and secondly, because the less one has the more sparing he becomes.”

Skuldfrið looked at him. They walked in silence up the hill. When he had assisted her to a seat and stretched himself upon the grass near her, she said, —

“So my friend has also had sorrow?”

“The past lies behind us, and I prefer to look ahead,” said Aberney, with something so decided in his voice that Skuldfrið felt a little frightened. The Professor very seldom employed this cold tone to her.

A long pause succeeded. Aberney's eyes followed the light fleeting clouds, which the wind chased over the sky. Skuldfrið's gaze rested on him. She thought, —

“What a strange being is man! His face is like the covers of a book, on which one reads the title, but not the contents. Whether these are joyful or serious, the cover gives no indication. I should like right well to throw a glance into my mother's and my friend's soul.”

Just then Aberney turned to her, saying with a friendly smile, —

“Why, my happy child, are you so silent?”

"I was thinking of my mother and my uncle."

"And what did Skuldfrið think?"

"That I dare not say."

"Are you afraid of me?" He held out his hand to her. Skuldfrið laid hers in his.

"Yes, the tone of your voice frightened me."

"Forget it then, and tell me what you were thinking of."

"Your answer reminds me that I stand almost alone in the world."

"You, who have a mother, a friend, and a young companion, who all three love you."

"Both my mother and my friend are strangers to me, when it concerns themselves."

"You are decidedly wrong."

"Say not so; think again. Does it ever happen that you, Uncle, speak to me about yourself?"

"And why should I?" Aberney's countenance again became very serious. "You are yet quite young, your heart and mind know of the shadowy sides of life only through the descriptions you have read. You are happy as long as this condition lasts. My life offers nothing instructive to a young girl, and scarcely anything for a youth. Mark, it is only children and old women who need to tell of the past. A man is sufficient to himself in all that pertains to his private life. Besides, we ought never to desire to penetrate into another's life, since that is a domain which belongs exclusively to the individual himself."

Again a pause ensued. Skuldfrið's hand remained clasped in Aberney's, without either of them seeming to be aware of it. Skuldfrið broke the silence, —

"You say that we ought never to seek to penetrate another's life. Perhaps you are right, and yet it seems to me impracticable. How do you imagine the heart to be constituted, that can behold with

indifference an expression of grief in a face, without wishing to comfort the one who suffers? If this is the case with our fellowbeings in general, how much more then with those we love! Ah, Uncle, you do not know what it is to read from childhood sorrow and despair in the features we hold dear, and yet to stand as a stranger who is not allowed to share the affliction."

"My child, you are now thinking of your mother," said Aberney.

"Yes."

"Tell me, Skuldfrið, why do you speak so seldom about her to me? Even as a child, you avoided talking about this person so dear to your heart; and if it ever happened, you seemed to say as little as possible. I have not wanted to ask you any questions, because —"

"You have not wished to penetrate into other's secrets." Skuldfrið smiled pensively. "And still I have many times wished that you had done so. Sometimes it has seemed to me as if the anxiety which troubled me would have disappeared, had I been able to tell the cause of it."

"But, my child, have you not always been free to open your heart to me?"

Aberney patted the little hand he held in his in quite a fatherly way.

"No, it was impossible for me to speak about my poor mother without occasion. Besides —"

"Well, why do you stop?"

"I believed that if my friend thought half as much of me as I did of him, he would talk to me more about himself."

"You then doubt that I think much of you?"

"No, not exactly that; but your feeling is not as warm as mine. You are to me a father, a teacher, a friend; but I am not as dear to you as a daughter."

"Skuldfrið, you are too much of a child to understand that a father's affection does not express itself in the same manner as a daughter's; else you would

long ago have perceived, that I hold you as dear as if you had been my own child; but let us leave this. I do not like to speak of my feelings." He again patted the little hand. "But I love to hear you describe your thoughts and impressions. If I have not before asked you to speak about your mother, it has been for the simple reason that I have waited for you to do it."

Aberney and Skuldfrið were entirely unaware that they were watched by two persons, who were, however, too far from them to hear what was said.

One of them was Fru Smidt. After her daughter, supported on Aberney's arm, had left the house and gone to the birch grove, she had stolen along by the hedge quite unobserved to a bank, behind which she could see Skuldfrið and her fatherly friend through the leaves.

Fru Smidt's eyes were as if riveted to Aberney's features, and now and then a heavy sigh of anguish heaved her breast.

The other observer was none other than Constantin. He lay outstretched upon the ground behind a bush that stood on the other side of the road, from whence he could see the yard at Ektorp, and also the hill where Skuldfrið now sat. It could be said that from the moment Aberney took Skuldfrið's hand, the countenance of the young man had undergone such a great change that it would have been difficult to recognize it, so wild was the expression of his eye. When Aberney, whose face was turned from him, caressed Skuldfrið's hand, Constantin clenched his fist convulsively, and ground his teeth so violently that some drops of blood appeared on his lips.

Skuldfrið resumed, —

"As long back as I can remember I have never, until I knew you and Tage, been attached to more than two persons, my mother and Annika. My feelings for the former were based on such a deep reverence, that I have never dared to approach her with full confidence. Yes,

I do not know that I have ever ventured to laugh in her presence, or allowed myself any expression of joy. When as a child I was singing merrily, dancing, or playing, and my mother came in, I stopped instantly; my joy had disappeared."

"Has your mother been severe?" asked Aberney.

"No, far from it. She has never said an angry word to me. I cannot remember that I ever received a reproof from her. She has always been very kind, tender, and affectionate."

"And yet this fear?"

"Yes! The cause of it lies probably in her gloomy, reserved, and sorrow-laden character. When I was quite little, she spoke very seldom either to me or Annika. She used to take me in her lap, press me passionately to her heart, and then burst out into wild weeping, which became so violent that Annika generally took me away from her, and then it often happened that I did not see her for several days. When she again showed herself she was silent and gloomy, caressed me with an expression of grief and despair, and afterwards spent several days in arduous work until a new outburst of sorrow came, and then again there was quite a while in which she was not seen. These spells of wild demonstration and violent grief troubled and frightened me. I loved, but I feared her. My free and joyous mind shrunk back from her sorrow, because I neither understood nor was allowed to share it. If I asked, 'Mamma, why do you cry?' then my question increased her inner suffering, and she hastened away from me. Then Annika would always say, 'Darling child, you must not ask your mother any questions.' As I grew up the violent attacks became more rare, and when destiny brought you and me together they had entirely ceased. It was as if the source of her tears had become exhausted, although her sorrow was not alleviated;

and I believe that my mother's mute and sombre grief frightened me all the more, while her ardor in attending to my education, in teaching me the love of God and my fellow-creatures, increased my affection. I was allowed to grow up free and without restraint, and the hours devoted to my instruction were the only ones which I could not dispose of according to my fancy. Annika was indulgent with me, while she at the same time tried to moderate my often extravagant notions, but without my troubling myself very much about her words. She was not my confidante, because she scolded me when I made excursions. Though I did not mind this in the least, it was not very pleasant. As to my mother, I scarcely ever dared to speak to her, except when Annika and I occasionally got into difficulty."

"But why did you not dare to speak to your mother? Did it displease her?"

"I do not know, for she always answered me kindly and gently; but I fancied she stood so high above me, that I did not wish to annoy her with my little joys or sorrows. She was and still is a saint in my eyes; I have very many times in thought spoken to her as to a higher being. Last year, when I was confirmed, I said that to her; but then she grew so frightened over it that she threw herself on her knees before me and exclaimed, sobbing violently, 'O my child, how shall I dare to meet your eyes when I have so terribly deceived you!' Ever since then I am seized at times with an acute anxiety, and I fancy myself to be an unthankful child, as I do not seek my mother's confidence, but feel more free and happy when I am not with her. O, you do not know how submissive she is! I would give anything to possess the right to comfort her and to be the confidante of her grief." Skuldfrid became silent.

"Thanks, my child, for what you have said," replied Aberney; "but put aside

all anxiety. Think thus: 'My mother has certainly lost the dearest she possessed through some misfortune, and this is the wound from which her heart is bleeding. Every touch causes her great suffering.' Let her keep her grief to herself. You can only soften it by avoiding all mention of it."

"Ah, say that to me once more, that I may not have cause to reproach myself for doing nothing to relieve it."

"You can accomplish nothing with such soul-suffering. The only thing that is in your power is to let her see a ray of comfort in your peace and gladness; and now we will speak no more of this subject. See, what a glorious afternoon! Hear how the birds sing their evening song to the setting sun, and you will feel thankful to God."

Aberney, in directing Skuldfrid's attention to the beautiful evening, had succeeded completely in diverting her thought from the subject upon which they had just been speaking. He reflected upon the poetry which we find even in the material universe. There was always something so profound in Aberney's words, that the listener was at the same time astonished and carried away by them. He knew how to dazzle with his genius, while he made his ideas clear through the simplicity with which he presented them, so that they were comprehended by every one who had thought and feeling. He spoke long of the necessity for our aspiring spirit to seek in all things the ideal of perfection, in order to approach it.

When the sun had disappeared behind the wood, Aberney rose, saying, —

"Now I will conduct you in and then return home."

In a few moments the Professor's chaise rolled away with its owner, and at the same time Skuldfrid fancied that she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs passing by. She sat by the open window and turned her head quite suddenly

to see if she was right. On the forest road which passed by Ektorp galloped a man on horseback. Skuldfrið recognized the white steed, and had no difficulty in concluding who rode it. At this discovery a higher color tinged her cheeks and her heart beat faster. Why, she did not know herself.

The summer evening was so far advanced, that the large saloon at Kronobro was lighted. The brilliantly illuminated room had no occupant, with the exception of Dr. Wagner, who was stretched quite comfortably upon a sofa, smoking his cigar and reading a book. Constantin stood on the balcony, leaning over the railing. He looked out in the half-obscure summer night as if he hoped that its mild and caressing breezes might dispel the tumult in his soul, or cool the burning blood. Finally when he had stood motionless a long time, he went into the saloon. At the sound of his step the Doctor looked up from his book, but resumed his reading directly. Constantin took a turn up and down the room, when he said, —

“Do you know, Doctor, the persons who visit Ektorp?”

Ever since the Doctor's first visit to Skuldfrið, Constantin had not spoken of the inmates of the widow's house. Wagner informed him, every time he came from there, how Skuldfrið was getting along, adding now and then a word about her loveliness and rare attributes. Constantin listened to this without interrupting or encouraging him. When he finished, the young man generally began to talk of other things. His letters to Skuldfrið he sent to the Doctor before he started. It was evident that Constantin studiously avoided speaking about her, therefore Wagner was surprised when he came out so directly with a question that had reference to her. Wagner re-

plied immediately, without laying aside his book, and as if it concerned the most indifferent matter in the world.

“With the exception of myself and Professor Aberney, no one visits that solitary place.”

“So, then you are very poorly informed.”

“Indeed! I am, however, of a contrary opinion.” The Doctor smiled agreeably and looked up.

“Every afternoon a man of stately appearance, in the prime of life, calls there. He spends the whole afternoon with your patient. Do you know who that man is?”

“Professor Aberney.”

“Did I not tell you that it was a person in the prime of life, and not an old man?”

“I beg your pardon,” returned the Doctor, smiling. “I have never affirmed that the Professor was an old man.”

“But he must certainly be between fifty and sixty?”

“Not at all, he is at the most a little over forty.”

“The one I speak of is still younger,” exclaimed Constantin impatiently.

“He looks younger than he is. I can assure you that the one you speak of is none other than Professor Aberney.”

“He seems to be on a very intimate footing with your patient.”

“Yes; she cherishes an unbounded affection for him.”

The veins swelled on Constantin's brow at the Doctor's words. He turned upon his heel and walked up and down the room several times. The Doctor resumed his reading, after he had followed the Baron with a long and peculiar glance.

“You once told me,” continued Constantin, after a moment's silence, “something about the Professor. What was it?”

“I cannot remember what it could have been, except that he is not considered favorably disposed towards Rus-

sia. Some years ago he had the eyes of the Russian authorities upon him. He was suspected of political intrigues."

"Yes, yes, now I remember it all. So he associates with the retired widow?"

"Not with the mother, but with the daughter. He has been and is still her instructor. Perhaps he will one day become something more."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that nothing hinders him from asking for the hand of his lovely pupil. He would not be the first man who brought up a wife for himself."

"You want to excite my jealousy against that fellow," said Constantin, in a smothered voice.

"Your jealousy? How could that be possible; is n't the girl indifferent to you?"

"You know the contrary."

"Not at all."

"Hush, that fox-play amounts to nothing; you only exasperate me with it, for you know that the girl interests me."

"Very well, Baron, if that is so, then I say to you be on your guard! Professor Aberney stands high in the respect and affection of this beautiful child. Besides, he detests the very name of *Russian*."

"So does she," thought Constantin.

"You will never succeed in gaining any foothold in the girl's heart so long as the Professor stands at her side. He certainly will not allow you to rob him of a treasure which he either desires to possess himself or for his adopted son."

"Why did I not follow my impulse to go far away from this girl, who I felt at the very first meeting would become dangerous to my peace?"

"That resource stands always at your command, and can be employed at any moment." The Doctor returned to his reading, and a quarter of an hour elapsed without any words being exchanged.

"You must in some way manage it so that I can get an entrance into that house," said Constantin.

"What you now demand is impossible. You have, however, one way, and that is to send your steward there with the word that you yourself desire to make out the new lease."

"That would n't answer. My *incognito* is then destroyed. Will not your patient soon be well?"

"In a week or so she can be considered perfectly recovered."

"You go there to-morrow at the usual time?"

"Yes."

"Good night!" Constantin went towards the room at the right.

"One word, Herr Baron. Fru Smidt stands in arrears for the last year's rent."

"Well, what then?"

"You can claim it whenever you choose."

"Do you think that I wish to bargain about the girl?" asked Constantin, proudly.

"I wish you a good-night," replied the Doctor, smiling. He made a deep bow and left the saloon.

"Infernal spirit," muttered Constantin, and went to his own room.

The next day the Doctor did not receive a little billet of a few lines, but a letter, together with a set of Schiller's Works for Skuldfrid.

When the Doctor bade her adieu, he presented the books with these words, —

"Here is, 'Don Carlos,' by Schiller, which you desired to read. I hope you will be entertained by it; but allow me to advise you that you no more believe in beautiful words than in splendid fireworks. *Poets and lovers are rich in phrases.*"

The last sentence was pronounced with a strong emphasis, and drove the blood to Skuldfrid's cheeks. When she was

left alone, she hastened to examine the contents of the book, and found in it the following letter : —

“You will most assuredly be astonished at what I now write, when you find that I boldly ask you a question, which I as boldly require you to answer frankly. You smile, and think, — I do not trouble myself about what he demands. One moment, I pray, and I will prove to you that you *must* break the silence which you have so far persistently maintained.

“When accident brought you and me together, it must have been because *fate*, the commander of chance, so determined. What influence you are to have on my life, I do not know. I cannot even give a name or a decided form to the interest you have awakened in me. I have only one thing clear to me, that it is a joy to think of you, to be in your vicinity, or to regard you from a distance. I know also that the sight of you, when I have ridden or passed by your home unobserved, has been sufficient for me, and that I do not desire any approach between us. As certain as this is a truth, so certain is it that I have suffered from seeing at your side a person who is neither your father nor your brother.

“Do not think that I envy this man his happiness. To envy him I should have to hold you dear, and for this I do not know you sufficiently ; but it has been my pleasure to think you free as a bird ; and it is a torment to me when it is said, ‘This man is destined to become her mate.’

“Would you know why? Our short acquaintance is so singular, and your whole manner so unlike that of all other women, that you appear to me like a rose which has been allowed to grow up in the midst of a forest, a stranger to the flower-beds of the garden, the frittering of the butterflies, and the restraint of the espalier. You are a child of nature, ignorant of all the wickedness of the

world, its false ideas and its ridiculous prejudices ; but, on the contrary, gifted with a cultivated mind, an innocent heart, and a poetic soul. In short, you are, to my understanding, a union of nature, truth, and culture, with the happy and open character of a child. There is something fascinating to me in thinking of you in this way. I desire nothing more than to retain this beautiful vision. Then comes your manly companion, like a dark shadow, to obscure the bright picture.

“Yesterday I was told, she is intended to become Professor Aberney’s bride. Well, what could I have to say against this? Nothing. But you were then no longer my charming vision, but a woman *who will marry*.

“What then do I want? I wish to obtain from you a confirmation or denial of this report. Four words is all I ask of you ; and this is very little, if through them you can give peace to my disturbed heart. It would be cruelty to refuse them. Whatever your answer may be, I shall always remain at a respectful distance. But if you should preserve silence, I might attempt to approach you in some way in your mother’s home.

“I am, alas ! a peculiar combination of good and evil qualities. Do not arouse the latter through a refusal, I beg of you. Return ‘Don Carlos’ to-morrow morning, and enclose in it the words I desire.

“Yesterday I was several times tempted to make a call on your mother ; but the fear of displeasing you withheld me. Should I really have displeased you by so doing? This question is most respectfully asked you by

“LOTHARD.”

It was the first time he had signed a name to what he wrote, and Skuldfrid looked at it as if she could scarcely take her eyes from it. Her first thought was,

"I ought to show my good friend this letter, and ask him whether I should reply." She began to laugh right heartily when she remembered the words there, that she should become Aberney's wife; and she concluded not to say a word to her friend, but quite simply to reply to the question asked.

Fifteen quills were cut, tried, and pronounced bad. The sixteenth was considered good enough to write with; but now it became a terrible puzzle, whether she should answer the question in four words, or whether she ought not rather to express herself a little more circumstantially. Besides, in the last part of the letter was another question which must be answered. At last, after she had scribbled her own name over a whole sheet of paper to convince herself thoroughly that the pen was good, she wrote these lines:—

"One can think very, very much of a teacher, without being obliged to marry him. Professor Aberney would by no means wish to have an inexperienced child for his wife. I should be very sorry if you made a visit to Ektorp. My mother never receives any stranger.

"Farewell, thanks for all your sympathy."

Skuldfrið read through her reply a dozen times before she folded it; she then sealed the little billet with a wafer and wrote upon it, "Monsieur Lothard," after which she laid it in "Don Carlos."

That afternoon Aberney did not come. He had written a few words to Skuldfrið, saying that he had gone to Abo for a few days.

In the morning, when the Doctor called on Skuldfrið, she was extremely embarrassed, and when she handed him the book, at his departure, she could not look up. He took it without changing a muscle of his face or uttering a word of surprise that the book had been read so quickly.

When Wagner's carriage drew up in Kronobro Court, before the Doctor's entrance, he was met by Constantin's valet, who requested him to go up to the Baron immediately. When he entered the saloon, Constantin, or Lothard, as we will hereafter call our hero, cried out to him, —

"Have you brought the book back?"

"Yes." The Doctor bowed politely and gave it to him.

Lothard rather snatched than took it from the Doctor's hand, saying, —

"You will dine with us to-day, will you not?"

"I shall have the honor."

Whether Lothard heard the answer or not is uncertain, for he had already left the room.

"My opinion was then perfectly correct," thought the Doctor. "At the very first meeting with the young girl he became enamored, though he shrunk from making her his victim. Bah! A Russian does not entertain such scruples longer than twenty-four hours; but this time his desires will meet a violent opposition; and if I manage my cards rightly, his passion shall only betray him into repeated meanness until — until — well, well, the proud and haughty Canitz shall one day repay me for all that his family has done."

While hatred played the dictator in the Doctor's breast, an entirely opposite feeling ruled in Lothard's. Shut in his cabinet, he hastily opened the book and took the letter from it. He looked at the little folded paper which contained words that had the power to bitterly wound or highly rejoice the owner of millions. So insignificant in its outer appearance, it could do him a harm from which his gold could not absolve him, or bestow a joy which his wealth could not procure. What an incomprehensible enigma life is! The person who possesses everything in abundance and material prosperity is often the poorest in actual happiness.

After Lothard had contemplated the note a long time, he opened it. With anxious impatience he glanced through the few lines. How extremely little, and yet how much did they contain!

Lively and impetuous in his nature, his impressions changed quickly, although his Russian education made him outwardly reserved. The habit of restraining every inconsiderate expression had become his second nature, so that Lothard seldom allowed himself those stormy outbursts of anger and joy which were in accordance with his character and distinguished him as a youth.

At the dinner-table he was particularly animated, and jested with his companions, the two young Russians and the Doctor. The latter's smooth and smiling physiognomy became slightly overcast, when his glance fell upon Lothard's handsome and beaming face.

After the repast they all separated. The two Russian noblemen intended to go hunting, their ruling passion, and Lothard, as usual, took his ride on horseback. The beautiful, snow-white creature had now for three weeks gone one and the same way daily, so that of itself it took the forest road which led to Ek-torp. At a little distance from the solitary place, Lothard jumped from the saddle and tied his horse to a tree, after which he bent his steps through the wood to his usual place of observation. He had not time to reach it, however; for as he was about to pass the narrow lane which led to Ek-torp (the lane at this point turned abruptly), he saw some one coming along the road with slow and careful steps leaning on a cane. He stopped. He had recognized the object of his lively interest. Skuldfriid looked up, and she also stood still; for though they were yet at a considerable distance from each other, she knew the stranger again. At this movement of hers it might seem natural that Lothard, as an impatient lover, would rush forward, but in-

stead of that he remained motionless as if he thus wished to inform Skuldfriid that he left her free to approach him or turn back. After standing a few seconds, Skuldfriid continued her way and came towards him. At this movement of hers he advanced with hasty steps. When he stood before her, he raised his cap respectfully, saying,—

"I thank you for not turning back when you saw me. You would have given me to understand that you did not desire to meet me."

"I have the whole day desired that fate should once more bring our ways together," answered Skuldfriid smiling, and with a warm color on her cheeks. "In order to help destiny if possible to fulfil my wish, I have to-day for the first time come out alone."

The artless tone with which this was said threw Lothard into actual embarrassment. The flattering effect upon his self-love in her desiring to meet him was entirely lost. Did she not speak of it as the most natural thing in the world, in precisely the same manner as if it had been the question of a schoolmate or an old acquaintance?

"And yet you stopped quite short when you saw me," rejoined Lothard, who did not know exactly what to say.

"That was quite natural. We were on the whole so little acquainted, that I was just considering —" Skuldfriid stopped and smiled as a child smiles when it intends to say something mischievous.

"Considering what? How kind you had been to me to-day?"

"O no, but whether I ought not to be angry with you."

"With me? And why?"

"Because through your letters you have placed me in embarrassment."

"I do not understand that. Will you not take my arm?"

Skuldfriid looked at him, then shook her beautiful head laughingly and said, —

"A Finnish girl cannot very well lean on the arm of a Russian officer. That would be a hostile support."

"Do you then consider me as an enemy?" Lothard regarded these charming features with a glance which showed that his feelings at least were not hostile.

"Most certainly, all Russians are my enemies."

"Allow me to believe that you are jesting. It would indeed pain me if you spoke in earnest. Yes, I even venture to assert that you have to-day proven the contrary."

"In what manner?"

"Through your goodness in —"

"Answering your letter."

"Precisely. You have thereby done a good deed, and proven that a Finnish girl can show mercy to an enemy."

"That is something which we all ought to do, but which the Russian seldom does."

"Pardon me, but let us leave this subject. You do not imagine how painful it is to me."

Skuldfrið stopped by a felled tree, which lay just at the edge of the road where it turned into the wood. She seated herself upon it, and said with a friendly look, while she extended her hand to Lothard, —

"Excuse me if I have wounded you, and do not keep so strict an account of my frankness. I say what I think, without intending any harm."

"What harm could you do, which would not be forgotten at the sound of your voice?" Lothard pressed the extended hand slightly and then released it.

"You said that you desired to meet me," resumed he. "To what may I ascribe this happiness?"

"In the first place, I had something which I have really desired to tell you for a long time; and next, it was — curiosity."

"Curiosity?"

"Yes, decidedly. We have met but

once, and since then you have written to me almost daily for three weeks. I should think that quite sufficient to excite my curiosity. Consequently, I desired to see the person once more who had addressed me so assiduously."

"This is the second time that you say 'once more.' Does that signify that you desire afterwards to be rid of me?"

"I have not thought about that; but I wish to say to you that — that —" Skuldfrið blushed. Lothard's conceit took her blush to his own advantage.

"Speak, I pray. Every wish of yours is a law for me."

"Very well, then I desire that you do not write to me any more."

"Does it displease you?" Lothard's deep-set eyes widened in a singular manner as he fixedly regarded her. He endeavored to discover a shade of embarrassment at the question, but in vain. Skuldfrið looked at him perfectly unconstrained when she answered, —

"Not at all. The letters have given me pleasure, but the manner in which they have been sent has troubled me. Besides, you destroyed all the illusion when you compelled me to reply; therefore," Skuldfrið leaned her head a little sideways and added with a smiling glance, "you must not write any more. I do not desire it."

"Rest assured that you shall be obeyed."

"Thank you."

"But you must now show yourself magnanimous."

"In what way?"

"You shall now and then, at this same time, rest here. I can then, as to-day, be able to speak a few words with you. Mark, that I leave it to you to give me this joy sparingly or generously as you please, if it be only once during my short stay in this place. Well, do you grant my prayer?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Promise it to me."

"Well, I promise."

"Thank you." Lothard bowed in acknowledgment.

The young people still chatted awhile, after which Skuldfrið rose to return home.

"Am I not allowed to accompany you this time either?" asked Lothard. "Has not our short interview been able to diminish the prejudice against my nation enough for you to take my arm?"

"How little you know my Finnish disposition, if you believe that any time or any circumstances can efface a prejudice that I have once taken. I am, like my countrymen, stubborn in good as well as ill."

"So you refuse to take my arm?"

"Yes!"

"You are a very singular girl, with a frankness that sometimes startles."

"In the name of this frankness I now bid you adieu."

"Then I cannot attend you?"

"No!" Skuldfrið rose. "The reason is, that I have not spoken of our acquaintance to any one; why I have not done it, I do not understand. I only know that it has been impossible for me to get the fact over my lips, and that in spite of my oft-repeated resolutions to mention it to my friend."

"By your friend you probably mean some young companion?"

"O no, it is—" Skuldfrið stopped abruptly. She remembered Lothard's letter, in which he had asked if Aberney was to be her husband.

"Again you pause; perhaps my question was impertinent?" Lothard's eyes flashed.

"Ah no, it is your last letter that produces this confusion, and makes me break down. My friend is Professor Aberney," added she, with a certain emphasis. "He has been to me a father and a teacher, and has treated me with so much kindness. I think a very great deal of him."

"How much he is to be envied; but

I will no longer detain you." Lothard raised his cap, and the next moment he was gone.

There was a certain something in his tone and glance that made a disagreeable impression on Skuldfrið; she did not know why, but the recollection of it disturbed her. She would have liked to call him back to ask if she had said anything that wounded him. She walked up the lane with slow steps, wondering why he had left her so hastily. When she reached the house she met Annika, who had just returned from her work in the garden.

"Dear child, where have you been?" inquired the old servant, anxiously. "You have n't walked your foot all out of order, I hope. There is a letter for you from Professor Aberney. It came just now and is in your room."

The letter announced that Aberney had gone to Abo to meet a Swede with whom he was to transact some important business. He was not to return to Junta before a couple of weeks. If Skuldfrið was uneasy before, then she became still more so at this intelligence. The postscript, however, contained the following lines, which drove away all anxious thoughts:—

"When I return to Junta, I will bring a guest with me whom it will surely give you joy to see again. I mean Tage."

Skuldfrið's heart beat fast at the thought of meeting Tage, whom she had not seen for three years. Those two weeks would pass quickly, and then, then what a good time they should have. Her face now beamed with joy.

Bulwer says: "Nature has given a thick fur to those animals that are to live in a cold climate; and those human beings who during their journey through life are destined to bear sorrow, she has endowed with a cheerful and elastic temperament." So was it with Skuldfrið. Brought up in solitude, unacquainted with humanity, life, reality, and all the

bitterness it conceals, she was a good and light-hearted child, who only through books knew anything of that which transpired in the world. What she should one day become, how her character would develop itself, could only be seen when circumstances called into action the powers that were now slumbering within her. Nature had given this child, who had grown up by the side of a gloomy and sorrow-laden mother, a fresh and joyous disposition, and her lonely and isolated childhood was passed in song and merry sports. She had a strong and lively soul and a warm heart, without these qualities being overshadowed by any sickly fancies or sentimental longings. Skuldfrið had dreams it is true, but they were bright and smiling, as her whole being. Her early developed intellect had been better cultivated and informed by reading than is generally the case with girls of her age; but it had not passed over to that premature ripeness which makes the soul and heart seem old. Like all persons of a lively temperament Skuldfrið received impressions easily, but these seldom exercised any but a transient influence; and at the present period of her life it would have been difficult to decide whether her feelings would be dependent on the impulse of the moment, or whether they would be strong, deep, and powerful. Now she could pass instantly from sad to joyful thoughts. A trifle could trouble or make her glad. Her disposition was naturally joyous, and sad thoughts were like light and passing clouds.

The next morning the Doctor declared that the foot was entirely well, but that she should be careful not to strain it. He added with his affable smile, —

“My visits as a physician are now unnecessary; but I hope that you will allow me to inform myself occasionally how my patient is getting along.”

Before Skuldfrið had time to reply, he bowed and left the room.

Two days had elapsed without Skuldfrið's leaving the place. She had worked diligently with her mother during the whole forenoon of the first day, and had read and translated as usual. She had practised two full hours; but when her mother asked her to sing several new songs, she had replied, —

“I cannot sing to-day.”

In the afternoon Fru Smidt took her work and withdrew to her own room, and Skuldfrið was considering whether to go down to the little building and set herself to weaving; but Annika declared her foot could not yet bear to work the treadles. The result was that Skuldfrið spent the whole afternoon in fixing up the flower-beds and pots, in the garden, etc. As it grew towards evening her eyes flew over these beds to the forest road which could be seen from the garden; but there was no living creature visible. When Skuldfrið, late in the evening, after all others had retired, sat by the window looking out over the neighborhood, she was astonished to find that for the first time in her life the day seemed long. It certainly must have been the loneliness caused by Aberney's absence; and yet it was not the form of the beloved teacher that returned continually to her mind, but the handsome and impassioned features of the stranger.

The second day passed like the first, and seemed to Skuldfrið equally long; although she was busy with her doves, birds, and others of the feathered tribe that were under her protection, which she had been so long unable to attend to. In spite of all these occupations, time seemed to loiter, and, what was worse still, she found everything she did tedious. The evening found her again by the open window, with her head leaning on her hand. She was just asking herself why she had kept so persistently within the gates of Ektorp these two days, without venturing outside. It was undoubtedly because the Doctor had forbidden her to

exert herself. She had arrived thus far in her self-examination, when from the shore was heard a beautiful male voice which sang a very strange air resembling a people's song; it was neither Swedish nor Finnish, but one which must have been composed under a more glowing sky. Skuldfrid looked in the direction from whence the song came, and she saw a solitary rower in a boat which glided quite slowly over the mirror-like surface of the water.

"It is he," thought Skuldfrid, and followed the boat with her eyes. The distance was too great to distinguish the features; but the whole figure indicated that it was none of the country people in the neighborhood, even if the song had not already done so.

Even after the boat had disappeared behind a projecting point, the retreating tones still met Skuldfrid's ear; and long after they had died away they re-echoed in her soul.

The following day when the evening approached, Skuldfrid wandered out through the gates and toward the forest road. She had no sooner turned off from the lane, than Lothard, with head uncovered, stood before her.

"You have been very cruel," said he, "to doom me to such a long waiting. I had hoped that your goodness would speak in my behalf."

"But it is only two days since we met," said Skuldfrid, smiling.

"Only, do you say? Well, for you who have not dared to appear outside the gate for fear of meeting me, the time may have been short." The tone was a little bitter, and the eyes looked darkly upon the young girl.

"To speak the truth, I must confess that these days have appeared to me very long. I have thought of you a great deal during this time."

Lothard's brow lightened.

"How kind you are to say that."

"And why should I not say it?" Skuldf-

frid looked at him with an expression that completely scattered the delightful illusions self-love had just created. "I have desired to ask you why you looked so displeased when we last separated. I should certainly have called you back to ask you the reason, had you not left me so suddenly. Now I should like to know very much what occasioned your change of manner."

"Is it actually necessary for me to tell you that?"

"Certainly, when I ask you."

"And yet if you reflect upon the subject of our conversation, you ought to find the key to the enigma." They walked slowly along the road.

"No, I truly do not understand what could have made you displeased."

"Not displeased, that is not the right word; but sad, I felt— Never mind what I felt. As long as you do not guess the cause, then spare me from telling it."

"As you please. I will not trouble you with questions, especially as you now seem to be better disposed."

"And even if I were the contrary, what would you care?"

"Very much. It would trouble me. I cannot bear to have any one angry with me."

"Any one; but if that one is a person as wholly indifferent to you as I am?"

"You are not indifferent to me."

"No, I am something far worse, I am a hated Russian."

Skuldfrid stopped abruptly and looked at him, saying in a serious voice, —

"Why remind me of that? I have during these days completely forgotten it."

"So much the more reason for my reminding you of it."

Skuldfrid resumed her walk, and Lothard continued in a calm and earnest voice, —

"If you entertain any kind feeling for me, I do not desire that it shall grow up under forgetfulness of the fact that I be-

long to a hated nation. I should then always stand in danger of losing it as soon as you remembered what I am. It would then be the same with me as now. You would instantly become dissatisfied, and it is better that you are never otherwise. I will not win your favor through disguise, I value it too highly for that."

A pause ensued. Skuldfrid walked with her eyes cast down, and Lothard regarded her attentively. Finally she turned her face toward him, saying, —

"It is true that I heartily detest the Russians; that I should be very unhappy if I was obliged to live in Russia, surrounded by that people; but that does not prevent one from finding among them persons with whom it is a pleasure to associate and who are entitled to respect."

"Tell me, is your hatred to my countrymen national, or has it some private cause?" At this question he examined her sharply.

"I have imbibed it with my mother's milk, and as far back as I can remember, the word 'Russian' has to me signified evil. When I was twelve years old, a little personal occurrence strengthened my deep-rooted aversion; and all things considered, I am actually surprised that I can see and talk with you without repugnance."

"And yet the discovery that I was a Russian made such a disagreeable impression upon you that the result was a sprained foot. I shall always have upon my conscience the weeks of pain which you endured in consequence. Do you not wish to sit down? From this hill we have a view of the beautiful lake."

He offered Skuldfrid his hand to assist her; but she jumped across the ditch without his aid.

Lothard followed her; and when they had stood a moment looking at the lake, which could be seen through an opening in the wood, the conversation passed gradually from Finland to other countries, which Lothard as a naval officer had

visited, and which he described in vivid colors. They had both seated themselves under a large tree, whose luxuriant crown softly shook its foliage above their heads. Skuldfrid listened with intense interest to the description of Italy. In an animated and brilliant manner Lothard spoke of an evening in Venice when he made a trip to the Lagoon, while the gondoliers sang one of those glowing songs which characterized the Southern people.

"Then it was there that you learned the song you sung last evening," remarked Skuldfrid.

This girl was certainly destined to throw Lothard into confusion. He had from delicacy and to relieve her from any embarrassment refrained from indicating by a word that he had seen her; and now she spoke of his song precisely as if she had heard it in company. He replied, however, immediately, —

"Yes it was one of the many gondolier songs I heard in Venice."

"Sing it once more, so that I can hear the words."

"They, like the song, are Italian."

"Ah! you mean perhaps that I should not understand them?" Skuldfrid laughed. "You are wrong, I have learned Italian."

"You? And of whom?" Lothard looked at her with surprise.

"Of my good friend, Uncle Aberney."

"He!" Lothard's countenance changed instantly, and he said coldly: "The Professor undoubtedly sings far better than I can, and therefore you will excuse me from granting your wish."

Skuldfrid looked at him.

"Now you are again changed."

Lothard passed his hand over his forehead.

"I desire that you may not observe how painful certain things are to me."

"Was it my requesting you to sing that was painful? If so, we will speak of it no more. I am so accustomed to

express all that I desire, that you must not pay any attention to it. Your song was so wonderfully beautiful, that I would gladly have heard it once more."

"Does Professor Aberney sing?"

"He sing!" exclaimed Skuldfrið, in a tone as if he had asked a perfectly useless or idle question. "He who has such a fine and powerful voice! Aunt Sara says that he has been celebrated for his compositions and his singing."

"That man then possesses all possible talents and attributes, said Lothard, with an ironical smile. "With your permission we will not speak about him any more."

"And why not? I do not understand you."

"So much the better. Have you already forgotten the question in my letter?"

Skuldfrið could not possibly refrain from laughing as she remembered it, so ridiculous did it appear to her that any one could think that Aberney, her fatherly friend, could become her husband. Skuldfrið's ringing laugh drove away the dark thoughts in Lothard's soul.

"Have I not answered your question? And besides, it is so extremely ridiculous, that I do not understand how you can return to it."

The conversation was soon brought back to Italy, and the time flew swiftly by. When the sun disappeared behind the wood, Skuldfrið bade the stranger adieu.

After that day Skuldfrið took a walk every afternoon, and soon these rambles extended as far as Junta to see Aunt Sara, who now felt exceedingly lonely, as she no longer had her dear nephew to fret at. Skuldfrið was especially welcome, and the old lady could not treat her too kindly. Chance so ordered it, that the young girl met the stranger in all her promenades, and every time they

separated she had discovered some new and lovely quality in him. True, he seemed at times inexplicably changeable in his manner. From being joyous and sportive, he could become dark and gloomy, and then he spoke with a certain bitter scorn that tormented Skuldfrið. These ebullitions of a changed state of mind occurred always if Skuldfrið happened to mention either Aberney's or Tage's name; otherwise he was brilliant and entertaining, and possessed a faculty of comprehending and describing everything from a poetic point of view. In his manner he was respectful and sometimes retiring. It was evident that he was afraid to approach her in any familiar manner. The three weeks Aberney expected to be away had thus passed without Skuldfrið's remarking it, so quickly had they flown. It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon in July when she walked over to Junta to surprise Aunt Sara with some splendid strawberries, cultivated and picked by Skuldfrið herself. As usual, the stranger met her at the turn of the road.

"Do you know what I was thinking of?" asked she.

"No, but I hope you will tell me."

"Well, it is now almost two months since we first met, and yet I neither know your name nor who you are. I have never happened to think of this until to-day."

"And why just to-day?"

"Because I heard Annika mention the odious name of the owner of Kronobro."

"Odious name, did you say?"

"Yes, it is hateful to me, because it revives the memory of an insult. But do not let us talk about it. My mother and my spiritual teacher have taught me that we ought to forgive and forget all injuries. This is however somewhat difficult for me to do, for when I think of —"

"Canitz," said Lothard, with a peculiar sharpness in his voice.

"Yes! In short, his name reminded me that you were visiting at Kronobro, and that I did not yet know whether you were the guest of the owner or the Doctor."

"Do you actually wish to know who I am?"

"Yes, most assuredly."

"But if I asked to be excused from telling you for the present, what would you then say?"

"That I know it already."

"Indeed!" Lothard could not hinder the blood from rushing to his cheeks.

"I have had a visit from the Doctor to-day, and he let me know it. The Doctor told me," continued Skuldfrið, "that there were two Russian officers visiting at Kronobro. One of them was named Lothard Gurtzskow." Skuldfrið laughed. "Do you not see, I know all about your name?"

"But remember, in case it should be necessary, that it is not I who told you that." Lothard said this with earnestness.

"O yes, I will not forget it. But I have read in a book called 'Rules of Good Breeding' that it was impolite not to be introduced before one addresses a lady."

"Yes, in society; but our acquaintance has been formed under God's open sky, and this makes a great difference. If I have committed the impropriety of not introducing myself to you, then you have done precisely the same. You have never told me who you are."

"You know."

"True, but not through you. Still I do not yet know your given name."

"Very well, I will be more polite than you." Skuldfrið stopped and made a deep obeisance before the young man, saying, "I have the honor to present to you *Skuldfrið Smidt*."

"Skuldfrið, Skuldfrið," repeated Lothard, as if the name had struck him, and at the same time awakened a painful

memory. "Yes, now I remember. You have actually that singular name; that name, which sounded so strange to me the first time I heard it."

"And when was that?"

"O, I once heard it called by some one!" answered Lothard. Then he added, interrupting himself, "For whom do you intend these berries?"

Skuldfrið told him that she had cultivated them and was now taking them to Aunt Sara. The conversation now came upon indifferent ground, and turned for a moment upon flowers. At the cross-road which led to Junta, Lothard stopped. He threw himself on the grass to await Skuldfrið's return. The thoughts which occupied the young man must have been anything but agreeable, for an expression of deep melancholy rested upon his features. At last Skuldfrið again appeared, beaming with joy. Lothard went to meet her.

"How glad you look!" said he. "You certainly must have received some very agreeable news in exchange for your strawberries."

"You have guessed right. To-morrow my friend and Tage are coming home. I shall be so glad to see them again!"

Lothard answered not a word, but walked silently at her side. Skuldfrið, who expected in vain that he would say something, asked at last, as he continued his silence, —

"Are you again displeased? Admit that you must always be so for a little while during our short meetings?"

"I am not displeased, and least of all with you; but there are certain things which lead me sometimes into painful thoughts. So, for example, when you with eyes beaming with joy speak of your affection for Professor Aberney and his son, I think upon myself and my poverty. I have no one who rejoices at my arrival or sorrows at my departure. I have scarcely a dog who is attached to me with affection. I feel something like envy towards

these happy ones who possess your friendship. I too would like to have a friend."

"Have n't you not any?" asked Skuldfrið with sympathy.

"Allow me to leave myself, it is a subject of little interest to talk about. Do not heed the expression of sadness which is at times upon my countenance when I am reminded that others are so *much* to you, and I so very, very little."

Again they walked silently at each other's side. Skuldfrið looked serious. As they were about to descend a hill, Lothard said, —

"Sit down here a moment. You will be so much engaged with your friends, that I shall most probably not have the joy of seeing you for a long time."

Skuldfrið seated herself. Lothard took his place at a little distance from her.

"In a few weeks I shall leave this place," said he.

"You are then going to St. Petersburg?" Skuldfrið asked this question with averted face.

"I do not know; I only know that I cannot stay here."

"And why not?"

"Canitz is then obliged to leave."

"And you must go with your friend?"

"Yes. You call him my friend, and you are right, he is assuredly the only one I have." Lothard smiled bitterly, adding: "But even his affection for me is not worth much."

"That man probably loves no one but himself," returned Skuldfrið.

"I believe you do him injustice. He loves himself least of all, and is, like me, weary of life and himself."

"But just now before we separated you did not seem to look at life with such weary eyes."

"I then forgot life for *you*. When I walk by your side, talking of indifferent matters, I forget everything in the pleasure of the moment, and I then desire to enjoy undisturbed the brief season which constitutes the sunbeams in my dull sky.

I then feel that life might be beautiful even for me. The sight of you has become a need of my nature. I fancy myself to be a better man when I am with you, when I hear the sound of your voice and your ringing laughter. Do not be astonished that every object which steps between you and me awakens bitterness in my soul. You have become dear to me, while I remain indifferent to you, or at the most a person that you regard with some kind feeling when none of those you love are present, and whom you will forget as soon as you meet them."

"I do not know whether you mean what you now say," replied Skuldfrið, "but it seems as though you ought to understand that I have friendship for you, when I like to be with you and feel regret when I do not see you. Why can we not say to each other what we both know and feel, that we are *friends*?" Skuldfrið extended her hand to him with an inexpressibly gentle smile, adding: "If you have no other friend, then you at least possess one in me."

Lothard hesitated to take her hand, but at last did so.

"I believe you hesitate to take my hand as a friend?" said Skuldfrið.

"Friendship between a Russian and a Finnish girl. Friendship between you and me. You a girl of seventeen, I a man of twenty-three."

"Well, what do you wish? I cannot possibly regard you as a Russian, and the fact of our both being young does not prevent us from being friends?"

"Almost," murmured Lothard; but added directly with a firm voice, "though at this moment it seems to me impossible that I could be your friend, I will try to make the impossible possible. Ah, you smile, and look at me quite astonished. You are too little familiar with human nature to understand me; but I will this afternoon tell you something which will prove to you that my

regard has not sprung from an ignoble heart. That I to-day met your offer of friendship with hesitation and apparent coldness was because I had made myself a solemn promise never to use your confidence and inexperience to my own advantage. You do not imagine the danger that a friendship between a young man and a young girl contains for both. I cannot make you understand how precious yours is to me, and yet I have the courage to say, consider well; if you wish to take back the friendly words, do it. I shall never ask of you anything but kind feeling. Mark, to-day I can act as I do, to-morrow it may be impossible."

Skuldfrid had never seen him so fine and noble as at this moment. His look rested upon her with an expression so serious, and at the same time so tender, that it penetrated her very soul. Skuldfrid reached him both hands, saying with the enthusiasm of youth, —

"You may care for my friendship or not, but it is yours. You may remain near me or travel far away, but I shall still be your friend as long as my heart beats."

"Thanks!" faltered Lothard. He pressed her hands and then dropped them, murmuring: "God protect you, you are an angel; and may he assist me never to occasion you any grief."

At the same instant a hoarse grating laugh was heard above Skuldfrid's head. She sprang up frightened, and Lothard grew pale, but recovered himself immediately and said, —

"It was a magpie, which sung its evening song."

They now walked homeward.

While Lothard and Skuldfrid were walking between Junta and Ektorp, a *tête-à-tête* of quite another character occurred at Kronobro between Dr.

Wagner and the steward of the estate, Herr Scheindinge. During the years that the young owner of Kronobro had been away, Dr. Wagner had been appointed by him to reside there as master of the place.

Wagner's well-known disinterested character had induced the General to invest him during his lifetime with the "*rôle* of authority" in his absence, because, as he expressed it, one could never count upon a steward's honesty, if he was left without a watchful eye over him. Although Lothard did not trouble himself much about his steward's integrity, he had, however, according to the General's once expressed wish, commissioned Wagner to be master in his absence, and to see that the dependants had nothing to complain of. This was a charge which Wagner willingly accepted, and for many reasons. He was by nature proud and imperious. These two qualities, which he had been obliged to suppress all his life, were now gratified in seeing all the subjects of the estate, from the lowest to the steward himself, treat him with the same deference as if he had been the rightful proprietor. On the other hand, there was in this man's singular character an inborn love for the people, a true interest in their welfare, and a sincere desire to render the position of the lower classes more endurable. Wagner was humane and compassionate towards his fellow-creatures so long as his own interests and passions did not step between. When nothing excited these, he was an honorable man in the full significance of the word, and would probably have remained such in all his dealings, had not a deep-seated hatred to Russia, and the Canitz family in particular, engendered and nourished from his youth upward a feeling of undying revenge, which set in motion all the demons in his nature. Endowed with a superior intellect, keen power of observation, and consequently a good under-

standing of human character and the individual propensities with which he came in contact, he had during his subordinate position been able to conceal beneath an humble and submissive exterior both his wounded pride and his passionate hatred. He had made himself the confidant of his greatest enemy, and so played his *rôle* with General Canitz, that the latter entrusted him with the education of the heir to the princely Canitz estates. His influence over Lothard had been all powerful and was so still in all that pertained to outward conditions. If the Doctor said such and such changes ought to be made, this or that tenant ought to pay a higher or lower rent, etc., then Lothard always replied, 'You understand that matter better than I do, act as you think best.' And in all these respects the Doctor deserved unlimited confidence; but he was not so conscientious when it concerned the young man's moral interests.

During the time they both stayed at the German University, Wagner had endeavored with a singularly well-studied skill to implant the seeds of all possible vice in the youth's heart, preaching to him the doctrine of enjoyment and deriding his naturally exalted ideas. In the years of youth one prefers pleasure; and as Wagner always knew how to procure it for him, he actually became more Lothard's friend than his mentor. Wagner would certainly have succeeded in making of the fiery, impulsive, and richly gifted boy a dissolute, bad man, had not an inexplicable chance awakened Lothard from his blind confidence in the Doctor, and instilled in its stead a deep distrust of his former tutor. This change had been so sudden that the Doctor racked his brain in vain to discover from whence it had originated. He only knew that Lothard, the next day after the one on which he had maltreated Tage and Skuldfrid, was unlike himself, and that he had eagerly procured Wagner the

place he now occupied, and would not hear of the Doctor's following him to St. Petersburg.

After this explanation of conditions we will return to the conversation between the steward and the Doctor.

We find the latter in his elegant library reclining in an easy-chair; before him on a table lay some accounts. Herr Scheindinge, a man of about fifty, with a smiling expression, was seated in a chair opposite Wagner. He sat on the extreme edge, as if he had not dared to seat himself fully, for fear of displeasing the all-powerful physician who at this moment looked anything but mild and gracious.

"I have had my secretary go through your accounts," said the Doctor sharply, "and do not find any mention of that invoice of grain which was sent to Abo shortly before the Baron's arrival."

"No grain was then sent from Kronobro to Abo," answered Scheindinge boldly.

"Was there not? What grain was it that was sent off on such and such a date?"

The Doctor looked at the steward with a sharp glance.

"It was Baron F——'s at Umbotrask."

"Ah, indeed!"

The Doctor reached out his hand and took a letter that lay on the table. He handed it to the steward, saying, —

"Read that aloud to me!"

When Herr Scheindinge opened the letter and cast his eye at the signature, he became deadly pale.

"You grow pale. Well, Herr Scheindinge, how do you think it will go with your position as steward?"

"Herr Doctor, in mercy do not make me miserable!" exclaimed the trembling steward, clasping his hands. He had let the letter fall on the floor. The Doctor bent down and picked it up, saying as he slowly folded it, —

"You have thus robbed your master of a hundred barrels of grain. That is proven. I have twice warned you against swindling and dishonesty; but you seem

to have thought you could continue with impunity ; and not enough with this, you have now begun to practise your dishonesty on a large scale. You ought to have known me better, and to understand that I am not disposed to let my master be cheated by such a rascal as you any longer. Twice before when you were detected, your wife's intercession made me retain you in your place. I have only taken the precaution to have all your actions closely watched. You know my sagacity and ought to have been on your guard."

Now followed a scene of prayers and explanations on the steward's part, but they were met by the Doctor with a frigid contempt. The result of it all was that Scheindinge had to sign an acknowledgment that he had purchased from his master such and such an amount of grain, which should be charged to his account. After this was arranged, the Doctor said, as he put the accusing letter in his pocket, —

"For the present I will not say anything about it to the Baron, but will let it depend upon how you behave. Meanwhile you are in my power, and unless you wish to make yourself perfectly miserable, take care that I do not find any more proofs against you."

Scheindinge declared that the Doctor's clemency would change him into an honest and conscientious man. As his protestations did not seem to come to an end, the Doctor interrupted him summarily with the words, —

"You need not declare anything, for I do not believe you. I shall have you watched closely, and at the smallest delinquency you will be discharged and given up to the law. Now to another matter. Has the widow at Ektorp paid her last year's rent?"

"No, you ordered me not to demand it of her, but to await the Baron's arrival, when you, Herr Doctor, intended to speak to her about it."

"That is true. You shall meantime remind her of the rent, and ask her when she can pay it."

"Do you wish me to fix any time for the payment?"

Wagner pondered a moment. He seemed to be calculating what might transpire, and what moment would be most fitting to place Fru Smidt in distress. Finally he said, —

"O no, drive over there to-morrow and give her a polite reminder, asking her to tell you herself when she can pay it. Remind her besides, that the time for the renewal of the contract is near at hand."

The Doctor dismissed the steward, who left the room, bowing humbly. When he was gone the Doctor touched a hand-bell and a little invisible door near a bookcase opened. A man somewhat older than the Doctor, with a meagre and scarcely agreeable countenance, showed himself. He was clad entirely in black, and walked stooping.

"What news from Abo?" inquired Wagner, without turning round. He knew from the sound that the thin gentleman was in the room. The Doctor sat with his back turned to the person who had entered. The latter advanced with noiseless steps and stood behind Wagner's chair when he answered, —

"They have to-day left Abo and are on their way here."

"So. And the correspondence?"

"Is exchanged."

"Good! Are they looked upon with suspicion?"

"Yes! All letters will hereafter be opened."

"Without any one's surmising from whence the denunciation comes?"

"Without any one's surmising it."

"How was the exchange of letters effected?"

"Through me."

"Then I am calm." The Doctor stood up and turned towards the thin

man clad in black. With his hand resting on the back of a chair, he regarded him while he continued: "I believe, my dear Worzkow, that the journey to Abo has made you still leaner than before. Have you been able to ascertain why Aberney went there so suddenly?"

"The occasion is a bankruptcy; the A—ska firm has failed. The Professor had money invested with this house. He loses no inconsiderable amount by them."

"How much should you think?"

"Half his fortune."

The Doctor began to pace the floor. After a while he said, —

"Have a stern and watchful eye upon the steward. Look thoroughly through his accounts, and see that he does not extort from the people."

Herr Worzkow bowed and glided out as silently as he had entered.

The Doctor seated himself again at the table, and began to examine the papers which lay there, with much attention. He remained thus until the approach of twilight, when he heard a horse gallop into the court-yard. Wagner rose and went to the window.

"Ah ha, he is now home!" muttered the Doctor, whereupon he went into the adjoining room, exchanged his wrapper for a black coat, and arranged his toilet a little. When this was done he went up to the saloon, but did not find Lothard there. A servant informed the Doctor that the Baron had shut himself up in his room.

"Could he already have suffered defeat?" thought Wagner; "that is hardly possible. The girl is altogether too lonely, and he too handsome not to make a favorable impression upon her. It would be stupid, if my skilfully conceived plan should come to naught, through some trick of chance."

The Doctor could not continue his silent monologue, as he stood looking out of the window, for Lothard came into the room.

"Ah, is that you, Doctor!" exclaimed he. "But why is it so dark here? Do you perchance love to muse in the twilight?"

It was something rare to hear Lothard jest, and therefore the Doctor came to the very just conclusion that he was in an especial good-humor.

"I have grown beyond the twilight," replied Wagner.

Lothard and the Doctor always spoke French together.

"In that case I am surprised that you have not ordered lights."

"Do you wish me to ring?"

"If you please. You will then spare me the trouble of doing it. To be frank, I must confess that I am tired." Lothard threw himself upon a sofa. "Do you know, Doctor, I contemplate taking a trip to Abo to-morrow?"

The Doctor was just on the point of ringing the bell, but at these words he put it back upon the table.

"I believe you forget to ring," exclaimed Lothard, laughing. "My journey seems to excite so great surprise in you, that it shines right through the darkness. What do you find in it so very wonderful?"

"Nothing particularly wonderful. The journey comes so suddenly, that's all."

"What do you want me to do? It is tedious here, especially since my two comrades have decided to leave."

The servant came in to light the candlebras. Lothard ordered cigars and wine. He lay stretched out on the sofa, humming a tune. The Doctor had taken an easy-chair and stared with an indifferent air at the ceiling.

"What are you thinking about, my dear Doctor?" asked Lothard quite suddenly.

"I was thinking of a song that I heard to-day; precisely the same air you are now humming. It was sung by a voice whose equal I have never heard."

"And how came you to hear it? Here

in this wilderness it seems quite incredible that you could have heard this aria. It must have been sung in your imagination," said Lothard, jokingly.

"Not at all. It was a young girl, who with her wonderfully clear and melodious tones chained me motionless to the spot. It was an enchanting revelation."

"I congratulate you; but if it is not a secret, I should be most happy to know who the singer was. Some child of nature who binds the sheaves in the field and sings Mozart's music; those two things do not go very well together."

"Neither have I affirmed it, although it was in fact a child of nature, but not engaged in binding sheaves." The Doctor smiled in his subtle way.

"You look so mysterious, my dear Doctor, that I perceive quite plainly your intention of exciting my curiosity, something which you will not succeed in doing to-day."

"You mistake, that I wished it. You who ride that way so often must certainly have heard the same song."

"Which way do you mean?" Lothard now turned his head.

"Past Ektorp."

"Ah!" Lothard rose half-way. "Does the singer live in that neighborhood?"

"Yes, at Ektorp."

Lothard now sprang up, exclaiming with animation, —

"Who do you mean?"

"My former patient. I thought you had guessed it long ago. Have you forgotten that you once tried to force her to sing for you!"

"Ah! I had forgotten the little singer for —"

"I too had forgotten the cause of the scene with the children until to-day, when I passed by the little place and my attention was attracted by the captivating tones."

"How could you so catch them in going by?"

"Nothing more easy. I intended to make a call on my patient, and as I went down to the gate with that purpose, I remained standing motionless, for from one of the open windows I heard a ravishingly beautiful voice which sang Anna's aria from *Don Giovanni*. It was sung with that ardent expression which carries reason and feeling along with it. I could not possibly leave my place before the song had ceased; and when I met Mademoiselle Smidt, I said to her, that such a voice was intended for the stage, and —"

"What, Doctor," exclaimed Lothard hastily, "you did not actually dare to utter to this innocent girl such an abominable insult as that she should become a singer?"

"In what does the insult consist, Herr Baron?"

"In the very thought that she should sing for money, and before a whole public. She, that simple and pure-hearted child of nature, tread the soiled boards of a theatre!" Lothard began to walk the floor.

The Doctor answered smilingly, —

"Pure-hearted and uncorrupted we have all been once, but none of us remain so until our death." A silence ensued, which the Doctor broke by saying: "Professor Aberney, who has been a distinguished singer and is a composer of merit, has cultivated his *protégée's* beautiful voice, and it would very much astonish me if he did not intend to derive some benefit from it. It would be a pity to shut up such a voice, and allow it to be buried here in Finland."

Lothard's face, just now so joyous, changed instantly. The Doctor continued, without paying any heed to it, —

"Aberney is a man who stands above all petty prejudices, and he has probably realized from the girl's childhood that she possessed a treasure in her voice which might procure her a fortune. This has induced him to give her the

careful musical education that she has received." The Doctor became silent.

A servant came in with wine and cigars. Lothard filled a glass for himself and emptied it at a single draught.

"I heard from the pastor that the young Aberney is also very musical," resumed the Doctor. "There will be a great musical time at Junta when father and son arrive."

He now began to speak with biting wit about those innocent little musical arrangements, in which a young man sings with a young girl until both have sung away their peace and their hearts. Then he proceeded to comment upon music teachers for young girls, who like Aberney are not yet old men, and who through their fatherly care make themselves half-gods to their pupils.

"This is a very cunning way to catch inexperienced hearts, and become absolute rulers over them," said the Doctor. "Thus, for instance, I am fully convinced that Mademoiselle Smidt is governed entirely by her fatherly friend, Professor Aberney, and that he has far more influence over her than her mother."

Lothard was silent and continued to walk back and forth. The Doctor had with much skill succeeded in rousing his worst feelings and in kindling a wild jealousy in his breast. The peaceful and ineffably delightful impression which the conversation with Skuldfrid had left upon him disappeared, and he accused himself of being a fool, an idiot, not to have tried with ardor to win her heart, but to have allowed himself to be satisfied with the modest gift of her friendship. Now this Tage and the detested Aberney would come and thrust him entirely to one side, and so fill her whole soul that he could not even hope to preserve the place he now occupied. At this moment Lothard wished he had possessed the power of the Czar to send Aberney and his son so far away that not even the sound of their names, still less their

presence, should torment him. Now he was obliged to behold quite passively how they were all to her, while he was nothing.

Whether Wagner waited for Lothard's excited feelings to appear in full activity, or whether he read their expression in his face during the long silence that succeeded, we do not know; but just at the instant that Lothard was wishing that he had the power to remove Aberney from the object of his desires, the Doctor said, —

"Professor Aberney is observed with suspicious eyes by the Russian authorities. His political views are not such that he can hope to remain in Finland."

At these words Lothard stopped abruptly. He regarded Wagner with a penetrating glance, while his clouded brow lighted up.

"For what reason do you happen to mention this just *now*?" asked Lothard, with a decided shade of suspicion in his voice.

"Simply because I have had to-day a letter from Abo, in which I am told that Aberney, through some inconsiderate utterances, has drawn upon himself the attention of the officials. Apropos of Abo, what time do you start to-morrow?"

"I am not going," was the answer.

Somewhat later, when the Doctor went down to his own apartment, he held the following soliloquy, —

"This is the second time that I snatch him from his fine resolutions and throw him into the whirlpool of wild passions. Let us see if I do not at last succeed in taking a brilliant revenge on this despicable Canitz. If I only knew through what person or cause my former power was crushed, and through what this continual distrust has been awakened!"

Quite early the next morning, Skuldfrid went to Junta. She had freed her-

self from all work that day, in order to welcome her good friends. Fru Smidt, who very rarely opposed her daughter's wishes, willingly gave her consent to this request. When the young girl, with her heart beating with joy, stood upon the steps of her friend and teacher's dwelling she was met by Aunt Sara.

"Are you here already, my dear child?" said the old lady patting the blooming cheeks. "I was just going to send Anders after you, so that you could eat breakfast with us. Ah, dear child, you cannot believe what a stately and splendid man Tage has grown to be."

The old lady spoke with much copiousness about how beautiful her favorite had become, and how good and excellent he was, while she was busy setting the table with Skuldfriid's assistance. When the clock struck eight, steps were heard on the stairs and the next moment in the saloon. Skuldfriid could not remain in her place, but sprang to meet Aberney. With childish impetuosity she threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, —

"Welcome, welcome home again, my good, my beloved Uncle!"

"Thanks, my dear, dear child!" Aberney's lips touched the young girl's brow, and he added: "God bless you, my daughter!"

Aberney and Skuldfriid stepped out on to the front stoop. There stood a young man of about twenty-one, with a face so thoroughly honest and good and so purely Northern, that he was indeed a beautiful type of the Scandinavian race. At the sight of him Skuldfriid took a step backward. When she last saw Tage he was a stripling of eighteen, thoroughly boyish and ungainly, with coat and trousers always outgrown, and hair that was never in order. Now, on the contrary, he was a fine-looking gentleman clad in the uniform of the Swedish Navy. Skuldfriid felt quite embarrassed.

Tage went to meet her and said with a smile that reminded of childhood, —

"What, Skuldfriid, it seems as if my appearance frightened you! Do you not, like me, feel glad to see the friend of childhood again?" He offered her his hand.

"Indeed I do, dear Tage. You are very welcome," added she, and laid her hand in his.

That day was one of festivity at Junta. Aberney relinquished his precious books and studies to chat away the time with the children. On his high, clear brow not even a shadow divulged that he was suffering the loss of half his property. Tage, on his part, never wearied of looking at Skuldfriid, often exclaiming, —

"How beautiful you have grown, dear Skuldfriid!"

The strong affection that he had conceived for her from the very first seemed to become yet stronger, now that he saw her again, and to grow warmer every hour. In the afternoon Aberney went to his own room to smoke his pipe and take his after-dinner nap. During this time Skuldfriid and Tage sat alone on the stoop.

"Have you missed me in these years that we have not seen each other?" asked Tage, and took Skuldfriid's hand.

"How can you ask such a question? I have every spring expected to see my chevalier, but in vain; he had deserted me," answered Skuldfriid, smiling.

"Your chevalier I am, and shall remain; but how is it with you? Are you still the lady of my heart?"

At this moment the image of the stranger appeared before Skuldfriid's soul. She did not know why, but she seemed to see his look resting upon her quite sorrowfully.

"Well, Skuldfriid, you are silent?"

"Ah, dear Tage, I am always the same childhood's friend; but I am now too old to play the maiden from the Middle Ages, as I used to do before, when I was called the lady of your heart."

"It was not in play that you gave

yourself that name, but it was after the encounter with Canitz, when I gained that." Tage pushed the light hair away from his brow and pointed to a broad scar. "Do you remember the promise you then made, to remain the lady of my heart all your life?"

Skuldfrið felt uneasy in mind when Tage reverted to this. She was soon relieved however by Aberney, who came to join the young people, followed by Aunt Sara, who whispered to her nephew when her eyes fell upon them, —

"Good gracious, what a handsome couple they will one day make!"

The Professor turned to her, saying harshly, —

"What silly talk, have you not seen misery enough from matches made up beforehand?"

Towards evening, when Skuldfrið was to return home, Tage was commissioned to have the chaise ready and to drive her to Ektorp. During the ride homeward he spoke of the most important events of the past years. Skuldfrið related to him all that had occurred, with the exception of her acquaintance with the stranger.

In the midst of the joy she felt at being with her dear friends, a feeling of longing stole over her, and she desired to see Lothard. The recollection of their last conversation returned continually. She fancied that it was wrong of her not to feel perfectly contented.

At the beginning of the lane, Tage jumped from the chaise and offered Skuldfrið his hand to help her out. As he pressed hers in farewell, he said, —

"May I come for you to-morrow afternoon?"

"Yes, certainly." Skuldfrið nodded pleasantly and went on. Tage cracked his whip and was soon out of sight, while Skuldfrið continued her way till she came to a little seat at the foot of a tree. There she sat down. She drew a light sigh, clasped her hands and thought, —

"O God! If I could only see him if but for a moment!"

"Good evening!" said a voice behind her at the same instant. She started and turned round quickly; there stood Lothard, looking so pale and sorrowful.

"Why, how pleasant this is!" exclaimed Skuldfrið. The liveliest joy was expressed in every feature. At the sight of this Lothard's glance grew brighter and he answered with a melancholy smile, —

"Thank you for these words! Ah, if you knew how unhappy I have been this day." He seated himself by her side.

"Another such day and I would be changed into an actual demon." He took her hand. "Say this moment that you truly have friendship for me! Ah! yesterday, I would have resigned it, but to-day it seems not enough. How much one can change in twenty-four hours!" He clasped Skuldfrið's hand between both his. "Why does so much bitterness always mingle in our purest joys? Why could I not retain the impression of peace which our last conversation left with me? Now it is as if this day, which is past, has been sufficient to destroy my calmness, and arouse all the conflicting elements in my nature. Say therefore some friendly words to me, the sound of your voice will certainly calm my disturbed mind."

"You must not look so sad," said Skuldfrið, casting a warm and sunny glance upon him. "If you have wished to see me, you as well as I ought now to be very glad. I too felt the need of seeing you; and now when God has granted this wish, I am contented and happy."

"Say once more that it makes you happy! I entreat you, say it once more!"

"That is unnecessary; you ought to see it." Skuldfrið smiled, smiled as a child smiles at its playmate.

"But you were happier still when you met your young friend?"

"That was in another way. Ah! I have reproached myself the whole day,

that I could think of you when I was with my old friends."

Lothard dropped Skuldfrið's hand and rose from his seat, stammering in a voice full of emotion, —

"Whatever pain you are to occasion me, I shall never forget how happy you have made me this afternoon. Now I will bid you adieu, thankful for your words. Some day you will understand how precious you must be to my heart, when I can leave you just now. Good night and God bless you."

The next moment he was gone, and Skuldfrið walked slowly up to the house. A delightful yet troubled feeling filled her breast, and made her heart beat faster than usual. She was at once happy and yet not happy. She felt a great need of going to her mother, of leaning her head against her breast, and telling her how incomprehensible she seemed to herself; but when morning again dawned and Skuldfrið stood before her mother, who was that day paler than usual, it seemed to her quite impossible to speak of her fresh young impressions.

Fru Smidt kissed her daughter's brow, and Skuldfrið fancied that her lips trembled. The young girl looked up quickly and threw her arms around her, saying in an imploring voice, —

"Mother, speak to me! To-day your eye is more sad than usual, and your lips tremble with grief. O, tell me, can I do nothing to relieve your suffering?"

"Yes, always be glad and happy; that is the only alleviation there is for me." Fru Smidt again kissed her daughter, and Skuldfrið did not dare to say anything more.

In the afternoon Tage came with the chaise to take Skuldfrið to Junta. Several days passed in which she did not meet the stranger. Either Aberney or Tage came for her every afternoon, and in the evening she was generally attended home by them both. A person of experience could easily have

perceived that there was a watchful care in the manner with which Aberney attended the young girl. With every day that passed without her seeing the stranger, she became more and more unquiet, especially as she thought she had caught a glimpse of the white horse twice in the woods. Two weeks elapsed. It was Sunday. Skuldfrið was to go with Aunt Sara to church, and Tage came for her quite early in the morning. His manner towards his young companion had become at once more tender and less confidential. That morning he was unusually measured. When they drove through the woods he said, —

"Can you tell me who the young man is who rides through Ektorp woods almost every day?" Tage's eyes rested searchingly on Skuldfrið, whose face at this question was suffused with a deep blush.

"I do not know who he is," answered Skuldfrið, confused.

"Have you never seen him?"

"Yes, I have."

"Indeed; and yet you do not know him further."

"Yes, I do know him."

"It would not have been very easy to deny the truth, when your blush had already revealed it. But if you know him, you must also know who he is."

"Tage, now you are unjust," exclaimed Skuldfrið, with sobs in her throat. "I never deny the truth, and when I say that I do not know who he is, I speak the truth. He has never told me his name."

"He has n't? And yet you have spoken to each other?"

"Yes." This was all that Skuldfrið could answer. The tears forced themselves to her eyes.

"Why have you made a secret of it, Skuldfrið?"

"That I do not know myself; but it has been repugnant to me to speak of it.

Dear good Tage, do not speak so coldly to me, but be friendly. Skuldfrið now began to weep aloud. This was more than Tage could stand. He bent down to her and whispered, —

“Forgive me, dear Skuldfrið !”

Just then the hasty fall of hoofs was heard behind them, and like a whirlwind a white horse with its rider dashed by. Skuldfrið's heart contracted with a singular pain when he rode past them without even looking at her.

“It was he,” said Tage, setting his teeth. He touched the horse with his whip and they drove rapidly ahead. Not a word was again exchanged between Skuldfrið and him. The former cried, the latter beat off all the leaves and branches with his whip, as if he had felt an irresistible need of expending his anger upon something. When they arrived at Junta, Aunt Sara wondered at Skuldfrið's red eyes, and Aberney fastened a long and searching glance, first upon the young girl and then on Tage, but said nothing. When they had taken their coffee the Professor's carriage drove up. Aunt Sara, Skuldfrið, and Tage stepped in. During the whole drive to church Tage sat silent and sullen. He avoided looking at Skuldfrið. Aunt Sara talked about the neighbors and much news that she had collected about Kronobro, and among other things that it was said that the young owner intended to stay there through the winter, but that his guests were to leave soon. Skuldfrið heard this with uneasiness, and Tage with a frowning brow.

“People talk a great deal about the young man's peculiarities,” said Aunt Sara.

“But from whom have you heard all this news,” interposed Tage. “I fancy that gentleman's peculiarities cannot interest any of us.”

“Mercy, my boy, how brusque you are. It seems to me entirely out of place for you to make such remarks. If

it pleases me to speak of what I have accidentally heard, it does not become children to term what I say uninteresting.”

Aunt Sara was quite offended, and she smoothed and stroked her apparel desperately.

The remainder of the way was continued in silence. Skuldfrið could have cried when she thought that she might not be able to say a single farewell word to the stranger.

On reaching the church, Tage lifted Skuldfrið from the carriage and whispered, —

“Forgive me, Skuldfrið, if I have grieved you. I will not enter the house of God before you have told me that you are not angry with Tage.”

Skuldfrið smiled at him kindly. She pressed his hand heartily and replied, —

“I shall soon become calm and happy again in the temple, when I hear the word of God.”

But Skuldfrið deceived herself. With head bowed down she prayed earnestly and devoutly ; but her prayers had not the same tranquillizing effect as usual, for she was filled with inquietude.

The dinner at Junta, after the journey to church, was silent ; general want of harmony prevailed. Aunt Sara considered that her dignity demanded her to manifest her displeasure towards Tage. Besides several little vexations had occurred, as, for instance, the steak was burned, and the pie was not a success, — discoveries which put the old lady out of humor. Skuldfrið, contrary to habit, was silent and looked sorrowful. Tage's countenance was sombre, like an autumn sky. Aberney seemed particularly taciturn. It was very evident that the Professor's thoughts were not upon the things around him, but were occupied with quite different matters. When

dinner was over he nodded to Skuldfrið and Tage, saying, —

"You will have to entertain yourselves alone for awhile; I have some writing to do." With this he went into his room.

Aunt Sara hurriedly smoothed out a wrinkle in her skirt, took her bunch of keys and trotted off to the kitchen, to let the cook know in a short and appropriate speech what an offence she had committed in destroying God's gifts. Then Sara went to her own room to read a little in a religious book, when she dropped asleep and it became tea-time.

Skuldfrið sat on the front steps and threw peas to a flock of beautiful pigeons, which hopped about the yard. Tage stood leaning against the door-post, looking at her with a sorrowful expression. Skuldfrið's face had brightened up while feeding the pigeons, and she spoke to them in a voice which plainly indicated that the presence of her favorites had considerably dispelled her bad-humor. She threw her last peas to them with the words, —

"There, my pets, this enjoyment is over; now fly away, glad and free! O, if I had wings like you!" She turned to Tage and gave him her hand, saying with a friendly smile, —

"What is the matter with my friend? Is he still offended with me?"

Tage took the proffered hand, saying, —

"Everything dark and gloomy disappears when Skuldfrið smiles; and yet I would give a good deal this moment if I could speak openly to you."

Skuldfrið got up and laid her hand upon his arm, saying, —

"Why certainly you can. Who should hinder you?"

"Perhaps you would become angry and 'out of sorts.'"

"I might become all 'out of sorts,' but angry with you, Tage, that is impossible."

"Well, we will see. Take my arm and let us go and sit at the foot of the

rock. There we can talk without being disturbed, as we have so many times when we were children. It seems to me that it is just the place to put me in right condition for what I have to say."

Skuldfrið took his arm and they walked across the yard to a grassy plat by a rock which raised itself like a giant in the midst of the wood. This moss-covered granite crag, crested with dwarf pines, bent over the little plain, which seemed to be environed by its arms, and sheltered from the ravages of the north-wind. From the top of the rock a beautiful view was afforded over the whole place and the surrounding country.

The two young people placed themselves on a rustic seat under a hanging birch.

"Well, Tage," said Skuldfrið, as he continued to keep silence, "did you not have something to say? I have waited some time for you to begin."

"Do you believe, Skuldfrið, that I am fond of you?" asked the young man.

"What a strange question. How can you doubt it?"

"And still you have no confidence in me. I am not now, as formerly, the friend with whom you exchange your thoughts."

"Yes, Tage, you will always be a friend, that I know for certain."

"And yet you have secrets with me?"

Skuldfrið lowered her head, without replying.

"You have known that stranger a long time, and yet you have not spoken to me about him."

"Because I have not done so to any one."

"But this behavior is so unlike you."

"Ah yes! I know it, and I cannot explain the reason."

A pause ensued. Tage was apparently struggling with his excited feelings. At last he resumed, —

"Tell me how you and he became acquainted. Will you do that, Skuldfrið?"

"Willingly. I shall certainly become lighter in heart after it." Skuldfrið laid her hand in Tage's and told him all about her first meeting with Lothard as well as those that followed.

Tage's brow grew paler and paler as he listened to Skuldfrið's words. It was the first really bitter moment of his life. When Skuldfrið had finished, he said slowly, —

"Do you love him?"

At this question, so simple in itself, and which any other young girl would have understood so easily, Skuldfrið sprang up and stared at him as if he had said something perfectly dreadful.

"Good God, Tage, what is that you say!" exclaimed she.

"I ask if you love him; if he is very, very dear to you?"

"I have never thought about that. I like to see and talk with him, but this is the only thing that is clear to me. That I never feel for him the hearty affection that I cherish for you and Uncle Aberney is perfectly certain. No, if I was told, 'You have the choice either never to see the stranger or never to see Tage,' then I should choose without hesitation never to see him."

"God be thanked!" exclaimed Tage, seizing her hands hastily and kissing them. At the same moment a stone rolled down from the rock and to their very feet. They looked up involuntarily, but there was no one to be seen.

"Now, dear Skuldfrið, my heart's lady, now I am calm and happy," said Tage, drawing Skuldfrið down upon the seat beside him.

Skuldfrið, on her part, was by no means calm and still less happy. All the inquietude she had felt during the day returned with renewed force, and she was seized with a violent desire to burst into tears; but she kept them back from the fear that Tage would ask her why she wept, while she could not herself account for the feeling that so oppressed her.

Tage, with his inexperienced heart and the credulity of his years, embraced everything that flattered his desires, without questioning whether he was dazzled by a false light or not.

Skuldfrið had said, "If one bade me to choose between you and the stranger, there could be no question about my decision." What more did Tage need to know? What could it avail to torment himself and Skuldfrið, now that he had obtained this certainty. He said also in a voice so kind that it became caressing, —

"Skuldfrið, let me once read in your eyes that you hold me as dear as in childhood!"

"I am and shall always remain your own sister, your friend."

Tage had wanted to add, "And the lady of my heart"; but at this moment a whole shower of stones fell down from the cliff, and one of them nearly struck Skuldfrið on the head.

This little occurrence was a startling interruption. Skuldfrið, jumped up from affright; Tage could not understand what had started this strange fall of stones. Before they had time to recover themselves, Aunt Sara appeared at the gate and called to them. Aberney stood on the stoop, and when Skuldfrið saw him she hastened to obey the summons. The Professor was now in his usual humor, and Tage was again cheerful and happy. Aunt Sara had slept away her vexation, so that all, except Skuldfrið, were in a better state of mind. A leaden weight hung over her soul. In the midst of this depression there was one intense feeling, longing for the stranger.

"What ails my summer-bird to-day?" asked Aberney at length, laying his hand on her head.

"Ah, I do not know; I feel so strangely unquiet," faltered Skuldfrið, and taking her friend's hand she pressed it to her lips. "I feel that something may have happened at home, and so I think it is best for me to return."

"Do you wish to?"

"Yes." Again she kissed the hand which so lovingly caressed her.

"Have the chaise brought round," said Aberney to Tage. When he was alone with Skuldfrið he asked her gently, —

"Has Tage made you feel bad? Has he been tormenting you, as he used to do when you were children?"

"O no, Tage always does right. It is I who am to blame."

In a few minutes Skuldfrið and Tage sat in the yellow chaise on their way to Ektorp. Tage spoke of everything which he thought might interest or amuse Skuldfrið, and as a recompense for his laudable efforts he obtained a gentle smile. At the little road down to Ektorp Tage stopped, and when Skuldfrið at the same instant jumped out, he said, —

"Give me your hand and let me thank you for this day. Forgive me, if my words have grieved you; but you are very, very dear to me."

Skuldfrið extended her hand and nodded, after which she hurried away. On the front stoop sat Annika.

"How is mamma?" asked Skuldfrið. "Is she down in the summer-house?"

"No, my child, she has gone to her room, and told me that she wanted to be alone; but why do you come home so early?"

"I was uneasy about mamma." Skuldfrið took her way to her own room.

Meanwhile Tage drove back to Junta. He let the reins lie loose, and the hand which held them rested carelessly on his knee. He sat absorbed in thought. He reviewed the years that he and Skuldfrið had spent together when they were children, calling to mind all the proofs of friendship and affection he had received from her as a little girl. He then examined the weeks that he had been at home, thought of her equally cordial

manner, and came to the conclusion that, as he was attached to her with the warmest of feelings, so was she also to him. How faithful was the look she gave him when she uttered the words, "There could be no question about my choice," and finally, how slight must not the interest have been in the stranger, when she did not even endeavor to learn his name. Why had she concealed her acquaintance with him? This was a question which reason presented. The heart was immediately ready with the explanation, that it had occurred from the usual girlish caprice. That she had talked with the stranger, and even met him frequently, did not prove any fancy for him, but only that it was a diversion in her uniform life, something which deviated from the ordinary routine. From this thorough examination, as he considered it, of his own feelings and Skuldfrið's behavior, he passed over to those delightful and beautiful dreams of youth in which the future is pictured so smiling. He imagined Skuldfrið as his wife, and his heart beat at the thought of the happiness which should then be theirs. Just as he had reached this Eden in his fancy, the sound of hoofs was heard. Tage started and listened. It was easy to distinguish from the sound that a man on horseback approached; at the turn of the road a white horse was seen. If Tage had let his horse pursue his own gait before, he now drew the reins quickly, holding him to a still slower movement. The advancing horseman seemed to follow the same impulse, and held in his horse as soon as he caught sight of Tage, bringing him to a walk. When they at last passed each other, one could have said that the two young men tried to pierce each other with the menacing fire of their glances.

"I should not have believed that he was so good looking," thought Tage. "I have seen those features once before; but when and where?"

Lothard thought: "She must love him. He has an appearance that is more than prepossessing." At this thought, he applied the spur to his horse, and the noble beast sped away with its rider.

Tage's bright and pleasant dreams were gone. The evil powers of unrest and doubt again awoke within him; and when he drove up into the yard, it was clear to his mind that he ought to speak with Aberney and tell him how dear Skuldfrið was to his heart.

While Tage resolved to ask Skuldfrið of Aberney, as if he had been the young girl's father, Lothard had pursued his way to Kronobro. If Tage's heart was uneasy and tormented by doubts, Lothard's soul was stirred by the wildest of storms. The difference between them was, that Tage, through his character and the long-existing friendship between him and Skuldfrið, cherished the firm conviction that their attachment for each other was of an identical nature. He had from the moment of their reunion taken for granted that he and she were destined by God. to be a pair. Tage's firm character and great regard for himself made him usually little inclined to distrust that which promised him happiness. The discovery that Skuldfrið was acquainted with a young man, and accustomed to walk with him, had in the beginning displeased, but afterwards angered him; especially as she had not mentioned the circumstance to him. When he spoke to Skuldfrið about it, a certain degree of jealousy had been stirred within him; but when she with her natural frankness told him about the acquaintance, and declared that between him and Tage there could be no choice, then the old deep-rooted belief in her attachment again revived, and he considered it almost impossible that she should not love him.

Lothard again, with all his advantages, had never, during his acquaintance with Skuldfrið, thought that she could love him. When his own feelings drove him to ask of her a kindly regard, it seemed to him that he had already gone too far, and when Skuldfrið gave him her hand as a friend, he almost feared that this friendship would nourish thoughts and desires impossible to be realized. He detested everything and everybody that came in her way, because he was afraid of being entirely forgotten or pushed aside. He was wildly jealous, because he continually distrusted his own power of pleasing. He would have liked to live continually as in those weeks which passed while Aberney was in Abo, having nothing to fear, and without daring to nourish any desires for himself. Had Lothard possessed more self-love and less distrust, he would not have become so unreasonably jealous as he now was. He would not have been troubled about little things, seeing in them irrefragable proofs that he was forgotten, nor failed to discover in a thousand small instances that he possessed a great influence over the young girl's heart. Without allowing anything resembling a hope to mitigate his jealousy, blindness ruled him, and something like an infuriated anger took possession of him when he saw Tage close by. His rage was not directed toward Skuldfrið, but against Tage and Aberney. He would have given half his fortune, if with it he could have purchased the right to annihilate these two men, whom he detested with his whole soul.

Dripping with foam the horse arrived at Kronobro, and the beautiful animal shivered in every muscle when Lothard with a violent jerk of the reins forced him to stop suddenly at the steps. With one spring he was on the ground; he threw the reins to a servant, and said in a short and commanding tone, —

"Tell the Doctor to come here!"

His appearance was such that the servant was sure that he was sick.

The Doctor obeyed the summons immediately. Lothard walked hastily to and fro upon the floor.

"What ails you, Herr Baron? Are you ill?" inquired the Doctor, with his eyes fastened upon Lothard's deathly pale face.

"Yes, I am sick, and you shall help me," answered Lothard in an almost scornful tone of voice. "You, who always stand in alliance with Satan, must undoubtedly be the right one to assist me."

"You do me too great honor, Baron, when you consider me to possess so powerful an ally. I might, however, without his aid, be able to arrange matters."

Lothard continued to pace the floor.

"You have several times told me, probably with some infernal design, that Aberney was a politically suspected person. Is that true?"

"You can convince yourself about it, if you will seize his papers, or rather his correspondence."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I know Aberney and his relations in Sweden. I know how firm his desire is to see Finland once more united with Sweden."

"So, and you are sure that he sustains a correspondence which —"

"If it was brought to light, would, as the happiest alternative, compel him to leave Finland, never to return."

"Good!" Lothard stopped before the Doctor. "Why have you intimated several times that he was suspected politically?"

"Because I foresaw that this intelligence would become of use to you. You are a young man of great influence; it needs only a few lines from your hand to the Governor, and you are delivered from both Aberney and his son."

"It is then the villain Wagner who showed me how to get rid of these men." He again began to walk up and down.

"You held before my wild passions the possibility of being freed from their presence, because you perceived that I would sooner or later come to detest them. In an excited and incautious moment, I can thus, thanks to you, make them miserable. Ah, that is terrible!"

"Herr Baron, if you were less excited and more calm, you would not call the one a villain who had always been your friend."

"Friend?" exclaimed Lothard with a scornful laugh, — "friend! You, who have always brought me upon the way of evil, and with an actual talent roused the devil in my blood."

"Very well, in that case, Herr Baron, let us separate. I will to-morrow resign my place as physician of this district. You can select a more honorable man, as I, like Mephistopheles, make of you the miserable tool of low desires. But I had believed that a young man of twenty-three was too independent to resemble an instrument which renders the tone that is struck upon it, but remains mute when no one touches it. A person who speaks of others' influence upon his principles and actions is a child, not a man. I am now ready to take my departure."

The Doctor's countenance had lost its usual false and smooth expression, and now bore a stamp of true pride. The Polish physician had at this moment a majestic appearance. He went to the door; but Lothard hastened after him, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said, —

"Stop! You are right; a child, not a man, allows others to influence him. Even if you were my evil genius, I shall never forget that you have been my teacher, that you belong to an unhappy nation and a still more unhappy family, and that you may be a man of honor towards others, even if you have not been so towards me. You cannot leave the position you now occupy, unless to exchange it for one more brilliant. Therefore do not speak of it, but do not call

yourself my friend ; that is an unworthy hypocrisy, which does not become either you or me."

The Doctor turned away from the door and came back into the room, saying, in his usual courteous tone, —

"Is there anything else that you wished to say to me?"

"Yes, I desired that you should do me a service." Lothard ceased. It was distasteful to him to continue.

"And that was?" asked the Doctor, after waiting a moment.

"To manage it so that I could meet —"

"My former patient at Ektorp?"

"Yes!"

A long pause ensued. The Doctor had apparently intended not to break it, but to force Lothard to speak. The latter threw himself on a sofa, exclaiming with passionate impetuosity, —

"For an hour's conversation with her I would willingly give a part of my fortune." Then he sprang up again, and going to one of the open windows stood there a long time. The Doctor maintained a consistent silence. At last Lothard turned round slowly and said with apparent calmness, —

"Will you undertake to get her to stroll to the forest road early to-morrow morning?"

"Why do you not write and ask her yourself?"

"I have promised not to write to her. Consequently I cannot do it. Ah! for two weeks that promise has nearly made me insane, because I —"

"Could not see her; and still you kept your promise."

"Doctor, when did you know me to break my word?"

"Never, I must acknowledge; but promises seldom remain binding when the feelings are in conflict with them."

"You do not know me, if you think that passion can drive me to a breach of faith."

"We will see how that will be," thought the Doctor. He said aloud, —

"Do you know why you have not been able to meet the young girl?"

"Because she has constantly been accompanied by Aberney or his son."

"And why have these two so faithfully attended her? Do you wish me to tell you?"

Lothard made an affirmative motion with his head.

"Although Ektorp lies apart from the neighbors, it is not however devoid either of people or gossiping tongues. Some of the inhabitants around here have seen you and Mademoiselle Smidt together; this has come to Aberney's ears, and he considers it obligatory to watch over her, so that she may not come in contact with you. Especially as — Yet, what use is it for me to tell you the true condition. You would only believe that I wished to arouse the devil in your breast, and therefore I will be silent."

With a formidable sagacity the Doctor understood how to excite Lothard's curiosity; and in fact the latter exclaimed with impatience, —

"What use is it to be reserved, when I require of you frankness. You do much more harm with these half-suppressed words, than if you spoke openly. Give me whatever explanation you please, if it can only free my soul from the infernally torturing thought that she avoids meeting me."

"Remember, Baron, that you yourself solicit me to speak."

"What a long preparation!"

"Well then, Mademoiselle Smidt is intended to become young Aberney's wife, and —"

"But you told me some time ago that —"

"Professor Aberney had educated her for himself?"

"Just so."

"That was only a supposition of mine, while the truth of the matter is, that young Aberney has been attached to her since childhood. There will probably be

an engagement between them before he returns to Stockholm."

Lothard's eyes flashed. He clenched his fists convulsively and uttered in a smothered voice, —

"Are you certain of what you say? Can you prove the truth of it?"

"With the greatest ease." The Doctor took a letter from his breast-pocket and handed it smilingly to Lothard, who rather snatched than received it from him. It was from the pastor of the parish and contained the following: —

"MY WORTHY BROTHER: Though it would give me great pleasure to go to Kronobro this evening and play a game of draughts with you, I must however resign it, because I have promised my old friend Aberney to drive over to Ektorp and talk with Fru Smidt. Aberney desires to see his son united to the beautiful Skuldfrið. If the mother favors the match, the sooner the betrothal can take place the better. I am the only visitor Fru Smidt receives, and therefore I, who think so much of the young girl, have accepted the commission with the greatest pleasure, for she could scarcely make a better match than with young Aberney. He is in every respect a splendid young man.

"I hope, my dear brother, you will not forget, when you are driving this way, to stop and see your faithful friend,

"ISAK ARBANIUS."

Lothard remained a long time perfectly motionless. He gazed at the letter, as if he desired not to understand it. Finally he said, speaking to himself, —

"It is on the mother, only on the mother it depends. They are then already sure of her consent. Ah! it is folly for me to wish to see her again." He crushed the letter and threw it on the floor. "The best thing for me is to go to St. Petersburg immediately."

"My embassy to Ektorp is then super-

fluous," observed the Doctor with an expression as if he was right glad of it. Lothard looked at him and murmured so softly that the Doctor could not hear what he said, —

"'Believe only what you can prove to be true,' was counsel, which I have sworn to follow. Very well, I will talk with her."

"Did you say anything?" inquired the Doctor.

"Yes, I intended to ask you to arrange the meeting to-morrow." Without awaiting the Doctor's reply, he hastily left the room.

"This time he creeps very nicely into the trap," thought the Doctor, as he went down to his own apartments.

When Skuldfrið early the next morning came down from her room, intending to go into the garden and attend to her autumn flowers, she met Annika, who handed her a little written slip of paper, saying, —

"Dr. Wagner just drove by; he was on his way to the forester's wife, who is sick, and he told me to give you this bit of paper."

Skuldfrið blushed when she received the paper from the old servant's hand. She unfolded it. There stood in French: "If you wish to comfort one who is unhappy, then walk out to the wood road at eight o'clock." These lines were signed with the name of Wagner.

Skuldfrið's heart beat with agitation and joy. It was two hours until the time appointed. She was just intending to go to the garden, to fill up the time with her usual occupations, when Annika called to her from the kitchen.

"What do you want?" asked Skuldfrið.

"You must go in to your mother," answered Annika.

"Is mamma up?"

"Well, I should think so. She told me to tell you that she has something to say to you before breakfast."

Skuldfrið went in to her mother. It was very seldom that she crossed the threshold of her private room. Fru Smidt had not forbidden her to go there, but it never entered Skuldfrið's mind to do it. The little room was to her imagination a place where dark and gloomy spirits dwelt, and as if every object there had been saturated with tears. Whenever it happened that Skuldfrið was called in there, she always felt a shudder pass over her; she could not yet free herself from this feeling; so when Annika told her to go, she looked anything but happy.

Fru Smidt's room lay to the right of the little saloon which one first entered. The sitting-room was to the left. It was spacious and light, having four windows. It contained a piano, a beautiful book-case, a lute, drawing apparatus, and two small sofas with work-tables before them. The windows were filled with flower-pots, and the whole room had something very cosy and homelike, and the view from the windows was remarkably fine. The saloon was smaller and darker, as the thick foliage of the trees hindered the light from entering. Its furniture was heavy, consisting of a sofa and chairs covered with black leather, a sideboard, dining-table, and a clock.

Fru Smidt's room was small and of a very singular appearance. An iron bedstead surrounded by green curtains, the color of which had suffered considerably from time; over this was spread a quilt which had been green originally, but was now full of dark stains, of a dingy brownish color, resembling traces of blood. Inside the curtains hung a pistol with a soiled and rusty barrel. On the wall opposite the bed was the portrait of a man still in the prime of life. The features were uncommonly noble and spiritual, and possessed a striking resem-

blance to Skuldfrið's. Under the portrait hung a man's coat and vest, both covered with dark stains. Two chairs, the coverings of which were so worn that they seemed likely to burst open; an oak chiffonnier on which was a gold watch and its case; a stand containing several beautiful pipes, a gentleman's toilet-glass and shaving apparatus, a book-shelf full of old books, and a rickety writing-table completed the furniture. The window was not adorned with either curtains or flowers; the gloomy daylight which entered through it gave to the whole a mournful aspect. Every object in this room seemed to whisper of events so sinister, that even daylight shrank from the remembrance of them.

When Skuldfrið opened the door and came in to her mother, she felt as if she had stepped into a sepulchre.

Fru Smidt sat before the open desk of the chiffonnier. She rested her arms upon it and held her head in her hands. As she sat there she resembled Remorse, who gazes with despair at the objects that have witnessed the evil over which the conscience weeps without hope of atonement. Before her lay a ready written letter which she had folded and sealed, but without directing it. Fru Smidt had her back turned to the door, and as this was opened softly she did not observe her daughter's entrance before she stood at her side and said in a voice that slightly trembled,—

"Good morning, mamma! You have sent for me."

"Ah! is it you, my child." Fru Smidt rose and with her lips touched her daughter's brow quite lightly. "I wanted to tell you, my darling, that I cannot work with you this forenoon, but desire you to go and see the forester's poor wife, who lies sick and alone. Inform yourself of what she may need for herself and the children, and take a little food with you in a basket. Annika intended to go there,

but I knew you so liked to take care of the poor, that I did not want to deprive you of the joy."

"Ah, dear mamma, you are always thinking of my pleasure and of assisting those who need help."

Fru Smidt pushed away the hair from her daughter's pure and open forehead and regarded her with a look full of love and grief.

"O, if I could banish every sorrow from your life; if through my own endless torture I could purchase pure joy for you, then—then—I could have courage to smile under suffering. Now," she turned away and added, "you cannot conceive what a mournful inheritance you have."

"Dear mamma, whatever inheritance I may have, I am proud to be allowed to call you mother," said Skuldfrið, and threw her arms around her; but Fru Smidt pushed her quickly from her, saying,—

"Go!"

"Mamma, are you angry with me?" exclaimed Skuldfrið, frightened.

"I am angry with you? No, never; but leave me now. The poor woman is waiting for you."

Skuldfrið kissed her mother's cold hand, and left the room.

The work in the garden was not to be thought of, for Skuldfrið had all she could do to provide for the sick woman and her children. When these necessities were all laid in the basket, she was obliged to drink some coffee; for as Annika said, it would never do for the "child" to go such a long way fasting. She could not survive such a misfortune for her pet, and Skuldfrið was treated not only with coffee, but with other good things, that she might not be hungry on the way. Notwithstanding her declaration that she could not eat anything, in order to satisfy the old woman at all she was obliged to make a substantial breakfast. All this so prolonged the time,

that it was nearly eight o'clock when Skuldfrið started down the lane. She felt so pleased that she should again see or hear something of the stranger. And sure enough at the turning of the road she saw Lothard, who with an agitated manner came to meet her. Before he had time to utter one of the bitter words which jealousy dictated, Skuldfrið exclaimed,—

"What an eternity since we last met! Now I shall again be like myself, after I have seen you."

She offered him her hand and smiled so cordially, that its reflection shone on Lothard's countenance. All sore and resentful feelings disappeared at the sight of her, and an inexpressible serenity succeeded the stormy elements. He clasped the extended hand without vehemence, just as one friend would press the hand of another. Neither did his voice betray any agitation when he said, quite sadly,—

"How shall I dare to believe your words, when you have so persistently, so cruelly doomed me to this long absence. You have not been able to steal a single quarter of an hour from your old friends for the new. How pained I felt, when I thought I perceived in your behavior a plainly expressed wish not to see me again, and —"

"Hush, you sin when you talk in that way. You know very well that this occurred against my will, and that I would gladly have seen you. Besides," added she with her ringing laugh, "did I not tell you so just now? Do not let us imberber the present by speaking of the past. I am at this moment so glad in heart, that I should like to sing from pure joy."

Skuldfrið's face was so beaming with happiness, that even Lothard's distrustful mind was satisfied, and all jealous thoughts were banished. She was so beautiful, her smile so friendly and playful, and her words so artless, that

the greatest doubter would without hesitation have allowed himself to be carried away.

"You are a wonderful being, who with a look, or a word, have the power of changing night into day. When I requested you to see me, it was absolute darkness in my soul, and now —"

"There is pure sunshine; is it not so?"

"Completely. Do you know what you are like?"

"A country girl who carries a basket," said Skuldfrið, laughing.

"Ah, pardon me, I did not see the basket, I saw only you; but for whom is that intended?"

"For the forester's poor sick wife."

"In that case allow me to carry it."

Lothard, the owner of millions and master over so many servants, now made himself the bearer for a girl whose mother was one of his humblest tenants. Skuldfrið, on her part, reasoned quite naturally, let the young man take the basket, for he, according to her idea, was the stronger of the two. When she handed him the basket, she said jestingly, —

"I have been waiting a long while to give you the basket." *

Lothard's countenance changed instantly.

"Good Heavens," exclaimed Skuldfrið, when she became aware of this change, "have you not yet been able to break yourself of hastiness? We are only speaking of a basket of food. Anything else cannot come in question. But by the way, why did the Doctor, instead of you, write to me to come this way?"

"Have you forgotten the promise you received from me?"

"Ah, true enough. I had forgotten it entirely." She looked at him. "That trait in you, not to break a promise, I respect. It is more Finnish than Russian."

* In Northern Europe this is equivalent to "giving the mitten."

"And yet I am a Russian, and not a Finn."

Conversing in this manner they continued their way to the forester's cottage. Skuldfrið chatted away like a spoiled child, full of life and merriment. She forgot all else, and gave herself up to the pure and agreeable sensations which filled her breast. Lothard was so governed by her innocent manner, that he shared somewhat her own tranquil condition. In spite of all that Lothard had resolved to say, it is doubtful if any word of deeper and more serious import would have been exchanged between them, had not a little incident, insignificant in itself, aroused the slumbering passions in the young man's breast.

When they stood before the door of the forester's home, Lothard said, —

"I now return you the basket and hope that you will not make me wait too long."

He withdrew and Skuldfrið disappeared. Something over half an hour elapsed before she came out again.

While Lothard was waiting, he abandoned himself to various reflections. A few moments before Skuldfrið stepped out, a large, beautiful hunting dog came rushing past him, where he lay outstretched on the grass. Directly afterwards a shrill whistle was heard. Lothard turned his head in the direction from whence the sound came. Far in the woods he saw a young man in hunting-garb, who with hasty steps followed the hound. The whole apparition passed suddenly, for the next moment both dog and hunter had disappeared among the trees; but swift as it was, Lothard was at once thrown back into the whirlpool of his contending passions. He sprang up, as if with the intention of rushing after the retreating person; but at the same moment Skuldfrið stood before him. Her features did not wear the same beaming expression as before she went in to see the poor woman.

The destitution that she beheld had driven away her joy. Her thoughts were so centred upon it, that she did not observe Lothard's dark looks. She only said, —

"Come, let us go."

Lothard obeyed, and for a while they walked silently at each other's side.

Finally Skuldfrið turned her face towards him, saying in a supplicating voice, —

"You, who are the friend of the owner of Kronobro, say to him that a little pittance from his abundance would procure him the blessing of a whole family. Ask him to help the poor forester. Such a rich lord ought not to have on his estate beings so destitute as they are."

"This very day their need shall be redressed," answered Lothard.

"Thank you for that promise."

"However poor and needy these people are," resumed Lothard, "I doubt if their poverty is as great as that of the one whom you desire should assist them."

Skuldfrið was now for the first time aware of his gloomy aspect.

"How heavy-hearted you look!" exclaimed she. "Have you too seen some mournful sight, while I was in there?"

"I have always mournful sights when I do not see you. In your presence I forget my unhappy destiny, and abandon myself to the delight of the moment. You charm away all doleful thoughts, and I forget reality in the dreams which enchant me. Thus, for instance, we have jested the whole way here, and yet I had quite a different reason in soliciting a third person to obtain this interview."

"You are right. I did not think of that." Skuldfrið stopped abruptly and added with anxiety, "You do not come to bid me farewell?"

"And if it were so?" Lothard's eyes rested on Skuldfrið, as if he wished to read her heart.

"It would deeply grieve me." Her eyes filled with tears. She seated her-

self on a stone by the side of the narrow and almost trackless path which they were following.

"Then you would miss me?" stammered Lothard.

"I shall miss you very much. Perhaps too much, more than I ought," whispered Skuldfrið.

"If that is so, how could you let me live so long without giving me any opportunity to see you?"

"But it did not depend upon me. My friend and Tage said constantly that I must not be allowed to go alone, and so they accompanied me. Yesterday I was so deeply troubled by not being able to see you, that I could not enjoy my visit at Junta."

"Do not remind me of yesterday, for then I recall the glimpse I had of you and that young man sitting together on the bench. Ah! in that moment there was not a single kindly thought or remembrance of me in your soul. And indeed that picture of you and him had nearly driven me so far as to —" Lothard checked himself, as if afraid of his own vehemence, and added in a changed voice when he met Skuldfrið's anxious look: "Forgive me. I will speak calmly."

"I do not understand why you are disturbed, why my conversation with Tage could excite your anger. You say that I forgot you, and yet it was about you that we spoke."

"You, spoke of *me to him*?"

"Yes, certainly, or rather Tage spoke about you, and I told him of our acquaintance."

"I envy the young man's happiness."

"You envy him? And what?"

"Your love," Lothard wanted to say; but there was something in Skuldfrið's demeanor which compelled him to say with forced calmness: "The friendship and the confidence which bind you to him."

"But I cannot like you in the same way as Tage," replied Skuldfrið, smiling.

"He and I have been each other's sole joy in childhood. He is my own brother, and I shall always remain his sister."

"If he is your brother, what then am I?"

"I do not know; I only know that it makes me happy to see you, and that I would like to be your friend; but if I was told that I must renounce either your friendship or Tage's, then it would undoubtedly be yours, because —"

"Because it is indifferent to you," returned Lothard, hastily. "Ah! I know that I am nothing to you."

"You know the contrary," said Skuldfrið, this time in an almost vexed tone; "and it is right ill of you always to believe that I say something different from what I think." She now rose to go, but Lothard hindered her with the words, —

"Stay, I beg of you, and forgive my outbursts of passion. I shall be calm, I give you my word upon it, whatever you may happen to say, if you will only hear me with patience and answer me frankly."

"That I promise." Skuldfrið sat down again.

"Has it never entered your mind," began Lothard, "to consider what brought me continually in your way?"

"You have told me that my society gave you pleasure, and as I have felt the same, I have not plunged myself into any speculations about so simple a matter."

"But you possess, together with your inexperience, a naturally superior comprehension, and this must inevitably have told you that the pleasure I experienced in your presence proceeded from some stronger feeling than mere momentary joy."

"Yes, I believe that you think a good deal of me." Skuldfrið colored slightly.

"You are right. I certainly think very much of you. You are the only living being that I am attached to with heart and soul. At the first sight you

became precious and dear to me, so dear that I feared lest my words or something on my part should pain or trouble you. Although your friendship was the most precious gift you could bestow, I was almost afraid to accept it, lest my feelings for you should acquire a demanding and presuming character. I did not want to expose you to my violent passions. To see you, if only for a few minutes every day, I would willingly have thrown away all worldly advantages. You are *all* that is dear and precious to me on earth, and yet I should never perhaps have said, 'Skuldfrið, I love you,' had not my despair at the thought of losing you now driven me to it. I know that you do not love me, I read it this moment in your pale cheeks, and I have never hoped for it; but I had hoped that your heart did not belong to any other. Even this hope circumstances have snatched from me."

Skuldfrið hid her face in her hands. She wept. Lothard exclaimed.

"In the name of mercy, do not weep! Have my words so frightened you that they draw forth tears? Does my love inspire so much aversion? O, speak, utter a single syllable of forgiveness, of compassion! Rather than occasion you one bitter moment, I will leave this place and never return. I will fly so far away that not even the sound of your name shall reach my ears, if you desire it. To cause you sorrow is death to me. May I rather be doomed to the bitter agony of seeing you happy as another's bride."

"Never!" whispered Skuldfrið.

"Never!" exclaimed Lothard, seizing her hand. "Skuldfrið, do not play with me! Tell me, what does that never contain? Shall you never become another's bride?"

Skuldfrið drew her hand away quickly, rose to her feet, and said. "No! there is something within me which says that. O my God," added she, sorrowfully turning to Lothard, "why have you thus

spoken to me? Why have you destroyed the joy I experienced in your presence? Now a whole world lies between us, so changed does everything seem to me. If you have any mercy, then speak no more in this way."

"Give me your hand," begged Lothard, "and tell me that you are not angry; tell me —"

"Here is my hand. I am not angry, but I am troubled. I feel like a stranger to myself, and as if separated from those I before so deeply loved."

Lothard carried her hand to his lips, faltering, —

"Why give me at once so much and so little to hope! To-morrow, perhaps even to-day, Tage Aberney will request your hand. You will then —"

"Remain his sister. Tage will never do anything so bad to me as that which you now indicate; between him and me, *you stand*." Skuldfrið took some steps to leave the place. Lothard followed her. She turned round with these words, "If Skuldfrið is dear to you, then leave her. She needs to be alone."

"And when, when can I see her again?"

"I do not know. Do not ask me any questions now." She looked at him with a glance so imploring, that Lothard, bowing mutely, drew to one side and allowed her to pass. He remained standing motionless. When she had gone a little distance she turned and stopped. In an instant Lothard was at her side.

"Is there anything you desire?"

"Was it your intention to bid me farewell to-day?" asked she with a trembling voice.

"Yes!"

"When shall you leave?"

"That depends upon you."

Skuldfrið continued her way, and Lothard walked by her side. Quite an interval elapsed thus. Suddenly she said with a half-smile, —

"I believe we have completely forgotten what you said awhile ago."

"Forgotten it?"

"Yes, at least *now*. I do not know exactly why I should get so frightened." She looked at him with a happy expression. "You are the same as you used to be; just as I liked so well to imagine you. You do not look so gloomy as you did down there." She made a motion with her head to indicate the place which they had just left.

The way was now very stony and steep. Lothard extended his hand to assist her, and Skuldfrið took it, while she continued, —

"You seem sometimes like two persons. Awhile ago I was almost afraid of you and myself, and had a great desire to run away from us both. Now it is again as if we were good old friends."

"Friends," repeated Lothard, with an almost sorrowful expression.

"Do not look that way, for then I feel like running away, to worry myself afterwards because I have made you feel bad." Skuldfrið looked at Lothard with an expression so cordial and sincere, that no magic glass was needed to read in it a pure and true affection. But there was something so original and peculiar in the sudden changes in Skuldfrið's manner, that Lothard for a few moments felt confounded by it. First she had been sorrowful and wept, then shy, and now she was again the artless child, who spoke with the most unrestrained frankness about herself. Lothard regarded her with a wondering glance as they stepped down the acclivity, and Skuldfrið supported herself on his hand.

"Then you repented that you wished to leave me so abruptly?" said he.

"Yes, and therefore I stopped." She laughed. "I was obliged to do so, else I should have had no peace, but your sorrowful face before me for the whole day. It is true that you have given me many anxious moments." Skuldfrið leaned her head on one side and gave him a tender yet mischievous glance.

Lothard stopped and looked at her with an expression of happiness and satisfaction, such as Skuldfrið had never before seen.

"Have I occasioned you anxious moments?" asked he, and smiled.

"Please continue your walk," said Skuldfrið, who was also forced to stand still.

"O, no, I am not inclined to obey, before you have answered me. Besides, I wish to look at you real well, so that the expression your face now bears may be imprinted in my memory. When shall I go away?" added he, in a voice which caused the little hand that rested in his to tremble.

"That I will tell you another time; but now I will not stand here any longer."

"You have not yet answered my first question."

"I do not allow myself to be forced; and besides I will not answer it."

They continued to descend, and Lothard said, playfully, —

"The Finnish girl has now a Russian for support." Skuldfrið would have taken away her hand, but he held it fast, saying earnestly: "There is a power which unites all nations, which knows no separate fatherland, but makes all the people of the earth as one; and that power is *love*. In love we all bend the knee before a common God, and his fatherly arms stand open to us. All that proceeds from him is to unite and reconcile that which hatred or prejudice has sundered. Love harmonizes and ennobleth all."

They were now at the foot of the hill, and Lothard released her hand with the words, "You are again free. Do you feel happier now?"

"I have not felt unhappy."

"You are a singular girl. In an inexplicable manner you call forth alternate belief and doubt, and draw me to you. Again, you force me to stand at a dis-

tance, and keep the words chained to my lips while I feel compelled to speak. Even now I would like to ask you a question, but I do not dare to, and yet my whole life is contained in the answer."

"Then do not ask it. You would most certainly again call forth anxiety and fear. I feel so happy at this moment, that I would like to keep this impression of true joy undisturbed."

At the lane they separated. Lothard then said, —

"Be assured that to-morrow at this time the forester's family have received the assistance you have to-day requested. You will go there, will you not?"

"Most certainly," replied Skuldfrið.

The to-morrow, what it has in store we never know; we have always reason to fear it.

While the above scene took place between the two young people, we made a little visit to Junta, and afterwards saw what was transpiring at Ektorp.

At the same time that Skuldfrið received the few lines from the Doctor, Tage, attended by his dog, started off hunting. He felt an irresistible need of diverting his anxiety through some violent exercise. He did not see Aberney before he went out, but told Aunt Sara that he should not return home to dinner. So when Aberney came to breakfast, he found only Sara. The Professor looked thoughtful and replied very briefly to her remarks. When they had taken coffee, Aberney intended to return to his room, but the old lady laid one hand on his arm, while she smoothed her apron with the other.

"My dear nephew, I have something to say which I have kept back long enough."

"Can you not delay it a little longer?" asked Aberney, with a smile which indicated that he would be especially thankful if she could.

"No, that I cannot, for it concerns Skuldfrið."

"My dear aunt, I hope it is not a question of getting her married?"

"O no, you need not be alarmed about my meddling in that affair, although I am neither deaf nor blind, and consequently discovered long ago that Tage is dead in love with the girl; but see here, I have also perceived something else, which you have not noticed, and which is that the girl is by no means in love with him."

"But, dear aunt, that is no reason for detaining me to talk about these observations," returned Aberney, somewhat impatiently; "especially as you can easily perceive that I have something else to think of."

"If I now did right, I should just keep still, to punish you for your behavior towards your old aunt; but I am a Christian, and therefore I consider it my duty to act conscientiously, especially when a child's welfare is concerned."

"Well, to the point then. What is it about?"

"About Skuldfrið, as I have just told you, though you do not want to hear it, and always try to put me off with your short answers."

Aberney was acquainted with Aunt Sara's disposition, and knew that when she became offended, he must submit to her loquacity, or else she would look sour and crabbed day out and day in for several weeks. Therefore when he saw from what direction the wind blew, he chose his part immediately, and placed himself with a sigh on the sofa, prepared to let Sara speak out all that she had on her heart. After she had poured out her indignation over the way she had been treated, how little consideration was paid to her, etc., her vexation was over and Sara again "good as gold." Now for the first time there was a hope of the Professor's knowing what she had especially to communicate; but he took good care not to say

a word that seemed like a reminder, for he would then very likely have encountered a new deluge. When Aunt Sara's harangue was ended, she drew a deep breath, smoothed her apron, and said in an entirely changed tone, —

"Has Skuldfrið told you that she has made a new acquaintance during the summer?"

"No, she has not," answered the Professor, and assumed an air of perfect indifference, which made it impossible for any one to discover what he thought.

"Well, whose acquaintance has she made?"

"A young man's. It is either that young Canitz himself or it is one of his guests."

"You do not know for certain who it is?"

"No, I do not; but of one thing I am sure, and that is, that she saw him every day during the whole time you were in Abo; that he accompanied her both here and home again; and that he was with her in all her rambles, and often spent the whole afternoon in her company."

"Who has told you all that?"

"Mother Monika in U——; but at first I did not believe it, for the old woman says so many out-of-the-way things; but when I was last at the parsonage the pastor's wife told me that she had heard it, and that her servants had seen them several times; besides this, the servants at Kronobro say that the Baron rides out to the widow's place every day. The forester has also seen Skuldfrið walking in the woods with a young man, and states that he usually meets her at the turn of the road. Now I think that you who have a great influence ought to talk to her about the matter, as her mother does not know how to take better care of her. You and I know well enough that Skuldfrið has done all this innocently; and though it never would have done in my young days for a modest girl to go

streaking around the country with a young man, still I can understand that it has occurred in sheer ignorance. But now it may have happened that this piece of ignorance has brought two evils with it: first, that people have begun to talk; and next, that Skuldfrið has trifled away her heart."

"What grounds have you for such a supposition?" asked Aberney.

"What grounds? How can you ask such a strange question? Do you believe that a girl like Skuldfrið, accustomed to do only that which amuses her, would go and meet a young man every day if she did not find pleasure in his society? Common sense, my dear Victor, would say that she must have some inclination for him. Besides, there is a very bad sign in that little circumstance that she has concealed the whole acquaintance from us all three. A girl is always reserved when her heart is concerned; and if she is of an open character and still goes and keeps silent, then one can take it for granted that —"

"That she in her loneliness embraces with childish joy everything that breaks the monotony of her life," interposed Aberney, rising. "What you now relate to me I have known for two weeks."

"For two weeks!" ejaculated Sara, smoothing her apron with both hands. "And you have said nothing? Not represented to her how wrong she acted? How she forgets completely her womanly dignity? How she —"

"Comprehends nothing of all that which puts you in an agony. No indeed, I have said nothing of the kind, nor shall I do it, though I know what you are not aware of, namely, who the young man is; but," added Aberney, with a peculiarly sly glance, "why do you not speak to Skuldfrið yourself?"

"I! Ah, that I shall take good care not to do. She would be just the one to answer me in her little aristocratic manner, that this is something with which I

have nothing to do. I am not her teacher, or one who in the smallest degree have taken upon myself her education."

"Precisely; and besides, Aunt Sara, you have no slight weakness for the beautiful child, which makes you lack courage to say anything disagreeable to her." Aberney laughed. "You fancy that the rôle of mentor becomes me."

"But you do not seem to think so yourself," said Sara, very testily.

"I never could bear tutors, and I consider all lectures upon what is becoming and unbecoming, right and wrong, unnecessary. I leave theory for practice. Therefore I have quite simply, without Skuldfrið's suspecting it, hindered her from meeting the young man. Words are always powerless; the only things which are effective are — actions. Now, my good aunt, we will say no more about this matter. I hope moreover, before the week is out, to have procured Skuldfrið a lawful protector, who has the right to step between her and every person dangerous to her peace."

Aberney left the room so suddenly, that Aunt Sara had not time to ask any more questions. She travelled out to the kitchen, meditating deeply upon two things: first, if it was Tage that her nephew meant by a protector, or whether her oft-returning apprehensions that Aberney was thinking of the girl for himself could have any foundation; the other was, how she could find out if it really was young Canitz that Skuldfrið knew. If so the girl must be saved, cost what it would. She had not time however to continue her reflections, for a man stepped into the kitchen and inquired for the Professor.

"By whom are you sent, and what do you want?" asked Sara, while she put on her glasses to give the stranger a thorough examination.

"O, I am a man from Ektorp and was to leave this here to the Professor,"

answered the one addressed, making a scrape with his foot that was meant for a bow.

"Ah yes, from Mademoiselle Skuldfrid I suppose." Sara reached out her hand to take a letter.

"I can't tell exactly; but Annika told me that I must n't leave it with any one but the Professor himself."

Sara gave a little jerk with her head, shook her apron smooth, and trotted out of the kitchen, telling the man to go into the saloon and wait there. She went herself to knock at her nephew's door, crying to him, "A messenger from Ektorp wants to speak to you." In an instant the door was opened and Aberney with hasty steps went by Sara and into the saloon. The old lady muttered, —

"We shall see that the old fool wants to have the girl for himself; but that shall never be as long as I live. No, the boy shall have her, as sure as my name is Sara."

In the mean time Aberney had received the letter and opened it with unusual haste. It contained only these lines, —

"Skuldfrid's mother desires to answer by word of mouth the offer which has been made to her through the post. She expects Victor Aberney to come to her as soon as he has read these lines."

When the Professor folded the note, the man said, —

"I was to tell the Professor that I had the chaise with me."

"Good, I shall go with you."

Sara's many questions remained unanswered, and five minutes later Fru Smidt's green chaise rolled away with the Professor to Ektorp, without Aunt Sara's being able to learn what it all meant.

When Aberney stood in the entry, Annika met him. Her eyes were red from recently shed tears, and she was so agitated that she could with difficulty ask the Professor to follow her in to her mistress.

Aberney, at his very first visit to Ek-

torp, had fancied that he recognized in this old and wrinkled face features that seemed to him familiar. He had once asked Annika if they had not seen each other before, and then she answered, "It is very possible, though I cannot remember it." After this answer he paid no further attention to her; but now it returned so vividly to his mind that he had met this look of sorrow and anxiety some time in the past, and that it had been directed upon him with precisely the same expression. Aberney had not much time however to make reflections, and, as he seldom asked questions, he followed Annika in silence through the little saloon. For a moment the old woman stopped at the door of Fru Smidt's room, with her hand upon the latch. She hesitated to open it. Again she fastened a look of anguish upon Aberney, then she turned the knob, and the door opened; but just as Aberney was about to enter, Annika whispered, "Have compassion upon her!" With this the door closed after Aberney, and he found himself in the widow's room.

Right before him stood Fru Smidt, leaning against the back of a chair. She resembled a petrified human being. The large black eyes gazed at Aberney with a soulless and glassy expression. Aberney stood motionless by the door; a feeling at once sombre and oppressive spread itself over his strong soul, when his eyes fell upon the living corpse before him. There was something horribly fascinating with this woman, which chained the glance to these features from which all motion seemed to have fled. After a few seconds Aberney turned his head as if to free himself from the terrible effect that the sight of Fru Smidt had upon him; at this motion his eyes fell on the portrait. Scarcely had his glance encountered the picture than he rushed forward, grasping Fru Smidt by both arms and exclaiming with wild vehemence, —

"Unfortunate, who are you!" He

drew her with him before the portrait. "That portrait!" He pushed her away from him with horror, murmuring, "You are thus —"

"His widow," whispered she in an inaudible voice, and sank on her knees before Aberney, faltering with despair, "curse me, the guilty one, but spare the innocent child."

"There is no curse terrible enough for you," muttered he, and turned towards the door as if to rush from the room, but Fru Smidt hastily placed herself between it and him. With her hand stretched towards the picture, she said, "In his name I demand of you to stay." Her arm sank and she clasped her hands as in prayer, "In Skuldfrid's name I implore you."

"O my God, this is then *her* mother!" Aberney passed his hand over his brow and added in an accent of bitter pain, "This only was wanting." His eyes were now fixed on the portrait, and he uttered with emotion, "May thy features remind me most vividly that she is also thy child!"

A long pause followed, during which Aberney's eyes rested with deep and sorrowful earnestness on the portrait. A sigh full of anguish roused him at last from the thoughts and recollections which the sight of this face had called forth. He turned slowly to the widow, saying with perfectly regained calmness, "I am now ready to hear you."

Two hours afterwards heavy steps were heard on the floor of the saloon, and Annika, who was in her room on the floor above, saw Aberney quite slowly leave the house. The old woman, during the whole time that the interview lasted between her mistress and Aberney, had alternately cried, read in the Bible, and prayed. When she now saw him go, she clasped her hands and murmured, —

"Father in heaven, what thou hast decreed to occur after this conversation, is surely best for us all. Amen."

She went down to the saloon. On tip-toe she stole to the widow's door and listened with her ear close to it. All was still and quiet within. Yes, as quiet as if no living creature was there. When she had long and in vain listened for a sound, she seemed frightened; she raised her head, laid her hand on the knob and turned it. The door opened. Fru Smidt lay senseless on the floor. In the same moment that Annika with a cry of anguish hurried to her prostrate mistress, Skuldfrid entered the saloon. Through the open door she saw her mother lying to all appearance dead, and upon her knees beside her Annika loudly lamenting.

Soon afterwards the overseer rode at full speed to Kronobro after the physician. Fru Smidt was dangerously ill.

Lothard had no sooner entered the saloon at Kronobro, than the Doctor came in.

"Pardon me that I enter without being summoned; a messenger has come for me from Ektorp."

"From Ektorp!" exclaimed Lothard, and hastened towards him.

"Fru Smidt has suddenly been taken ill." The Doctor handed Lothard a little note. It read: —

"For God's sake, Herr Doctor, hurry here; my mother is dying."

"SKULDFRID."

"Wagner, take my swiftest horses and lose no time," bade Lothard, and pushed the Doctor out through the door.

Ten minutes later the Doctor was on his way behind Canitz's fastest span, who in less than three quarters of an hour made the distance between the estate and Ektorp.

Annika, ever careful and considerate, had moved her unconscious mistress's bed into the large sitting-room, so that

neither the eyes of the physician nor any other stranger should penetrate into the dreary sanctuary. Motionless, without any sign of life except the unquiet heaving of the breast, Fru Smidt lay upon her bed.

Annika had, by dropping the curtains before the windows, changed the light and cheerful room into a gloomy sick-chamber.

Skuldfrið was on her knees beside Fru Smidt's bed, holding her hand clasped tightly in her own, and gazing anxiously at the face now flushed crimson and the fixed glassy eyes. It was the first time that Skuldfrið had seen her mother attacked by illness. To be sure she had now and then in Skuldfrið's childhood been indisposed, as Annika used to say; but at such times the daughter never saw her. Now it seemed to Skuldfrið as if the blood congealed around her heart, so oppressive was the feeling which her mother's senseless condition occasioned. She could have given vent in loud lamentation to the nameless agony within her; but it was as if every sound died away on her lips, while anguish held her in an iron grasp.

The time seemed like an eternity to the poor child before the Doctor arrived. At every motion, the slightest noise, she started and looked at the door. At last, after this painful waiting, the longed-for words were heard, "The Doctor is here," and at the same moment Wagner entered. Skuldfrið had sprung up and hastened to him. Seizing his hand she said with trembling lips, "Save her!" The Doctor's look rested a moment on Skuldfrið, and all that was false and supple in his features gave place to a stamp of true sympathy.

"I will do all in my power," replied he, and went to the sick-bed, drawing aside the curtains, but started back when his eyes fell on the patient. He stared at her a moment as if he could

not believe the reality of the sight before him. He needed several seconds to recover himself. Wagner was not one to be governed long by a surprise. When he had gained the mastery over the first impression, he turned his head a little and said to Annika, who stood directly beside him, "Draw up the shades, I need light." Then he bent over the patient, and took her hand to examine her pulse. His gaze was fastened upon her features, and he thought, —

"I must see this face in full daylight, to be convinced that it is *she*. If these distorted and changed features are actually the same that I have seen so beautiful that —"

The curtains were now drawn up, and the broad daylight streamed in over the sick one.

"It is she," murmured the Doctor, almost as pale as Fru Smidt. "What infernal destiny throws this woman again in my way and *his*? He drew a chair to the bed and sat down. He ordered a bowl and a bandage, and then opened a vein. When this was done, Fru Smidt made an effort to draw her breath, raised herself up in bed, and uttered a wild shriek. The Doctor seemed to have expected this, for he seized her carefully but firmly around the waist and forced her to lie down again. Then he turned to Skuldfrið, saying, —

"I desire to be alone with the sick woman and Annika."

"Only one word about — about — my mother's condition," stammered Skuldfrið.

"We hope that she will get better," answered the Doctor kindly, "but much patience and calmness is needed in those who are around her."

Fru Smidt now made a violent effort to start up again; but the Doctor held her still. She muttered some incoherent words, which seemed to make a painful impression upon the Doctor, and he said somewhat shortly, —

"Mademoiselle Smidt, be so good as to leave us." Skuldfrið went out. Wagner said to Annika, "Bolt the door, that no one can come in." The old servant obeyed. Scarcely was this done, than Fru Smidt gave another cry of anguish and tried to throw herself from the bed, while she uttered words in the wildest delirium which disclosed secrets of a terrible nature. The Doctor listened for several moments to the confused speech, as if he had needed to cast a glance into the sick woman's still sicker soul. Then he turned to Annika, —

"You understand, I suppose, that what she now says must not be caught by any other than you, God, and myself. It would bring death and despair upon the daughter."

"Yes, I understand," faltered Annika, "but how shall I be able to keep her from watching over her mother?"

"As long as her mother raves, she must not enter the sick-room. For the rest, I shall remain here until you have brought some soothing drink from the apothecary."

Skuldfrið was not allowed to see her mother for the whole day, although she begged for it so beseechingly. Sitting in the somewhat gloomy saloon, trembling with anxiety, and with her hands pressed tightly together, she listened to the wild shrieks from the sick-room. When twilight fell, it became more quiet in there, and Skuldfrið heard only an indistinct murmur. A feeling of trepidation seized the young girl's heart, and looking towards the door which led to Fru Smidt's usual room, she reviewed in thought the mysteriously sorrowful conditions which surrounded her mother. With an inward shudder she thought of all the objects which in that deserted room pointed to some very mournful occurrence. She fancied that she saw the door open and the figure of the portrait step out, advancing slowly across the floor; also that the face which she

had always regarded with shyness looked dark and threatening. Just as these images had become, through the gathering darkness, more and more vivid, the door of the mysterious room opened with a clicking sound; Skuldfrið gave a feeble cry of fright, and hid her face in her hands; but the next moment she looked up again quite fearlessly. Her blood congealed with horror in her veins, however, for before her stood a tall man, whose features in the obscurity resembled those of the portrait. The eyes rested on Skuldfrið with a sad and as it seemed to her a severe expression. The young girl stared at the figure, perfectly motionless from fear.

"What has happened, my child?" said a voice, which was to Skuldfrið too dear not to be able to scatter at once the fearful images that her fancy had evoked. She threw herself into the arms of the person who had addressed her. A flood of tears streamed down her cheeks, and she exclaimed, —

"God be thanked that my friend came! Ah! I am so unspeakably wretched; my mother —" She could not say more. Her sobs almost choked her.

"Is sick," said Aberney. "I know it, and therefore I am here." He sat down and drew Skuldfrið to his breast, adding: "Poor child, so agitated!" A deep sigh, full of anguish, heaved his breast. "Why do you sit here?" he asked after a pause, during which he allowed Skuldfrið to cry undisturbed, with her head leaning against his shoulder.

"The Doctor has forbidden me to be in the sick-room. He and Annika are alone there. I have not been allowed to go in. It is always just so. I can never be with her. It is just as if I had no right where my mother is concerned. I must certainly be a very bad child, that they should treat me so."

Aberney passed his hand caressingly

over the young girl's head and said tenderly, —

"Do not have such thoughts. Dr. Wagner is a superior physician, who always manages to give the first consideration to the sick."

"But, good heavens, she has been in a delirium the whole day, without sense; she could not have suffered any harm from my taking care of her. As it is, I have almost thought I should go crazy sitting here and only hearing her wild shrieks." Skuldfrið again wept violently. Aberney remained silent. He understood that the physician had kept Skuldfrið away from the sick woman, that she might not hear what her mother uttered in her delirium.

"Now, my child," said Aberney, after a moment's silence, "you must try to be calm. This is the first real trial God sends you, and it is most certainly not the last. Therefore mark my words, *that person is a poor Christian who cannot with erect head and humble mind bear the burden which the Lord lays upon his shoulders. The majesty of human beings lies in their strength of soul and submission to the Supreme will.* It would pain me if my little Skuldfrið had not power to bear adversity worthily. Tears and lamentations do not make the sorrow any less, but hinder us, on the contrary, from fulfilling our duty. Try to be strong. Believe me, many wild storms will sweep devastatingly over your life; and if you at the first blast allow yourself to be prostrated, you will go under in the conflict. Life is a struggle with grief, and he only conquers who puts his trust in the Father above."

While Aberney was speaking, Skuldfrið's sobs had abated, and when he became silent, they had ceased altogether. She whispered, —

"Thanks! I shall treasure these words in my memory and never, never forget them."

The door of the sick-room now opened,

and the Doctor came out. Aberney and Skuldfrið both rose; the latter hastened to him.

"How is it?" asked she.

"Your mother is now quiet, and I hope will become somewhat calm to-night; I think I can leave my place at her bedside for a few hours, and shall beg you to occupy it during my absence."

Annika had lighted a couple of candles, so that the Doctor observed Aberney. Skuldfrið was already in the other room, by her mother's bed.

"Ah, good evening, Herr Professor," said Wagner, politely. Aberney responded to the greeting.

"Is Fru Smidt's condition serious?" asked he.

"For any other person it would be very serious, but for her it is not so dangerous. She has a strong constitution, so that she will undoubtedly go through a severe inflammation of the brain, which has probably been caused by some violent emotion."

"Then you think that the daughter may be left with her to-night?"

"Yes, if they continue to give her the medicine I prescribed."

The Doctor took his leave, and offered to drive Aberney to Junta; but he declined, as he intended to remain at Ektorp to help watch, in case any assistance should be needed.

Wagner sat leaning back in his carriage and was taken rapidly back to Kronobro.

"What a wonderful disposal of fate," thought he. "This woman has been in my neighborhood for several years; I could have ruined her with a single word, and drawn down punishment and disgrace upon her head; and I have not guessed that the one I have been searching for with untiring perseverance was so near to me. And now, now it is I

who take care of her, who shall save her from death and insanity, and hinder her daughter from discovering who she is. Incomprehensible enigma, that we call fate. And the *daughter*, this child, who constitutes at once her retribution, her most bitter sufferings, and her only joy, she is the object of a Canitz's love. Shall the crimes of the parents actually be visited upon the children, or is it a play of the powers of darkness, who amuse themselves with this infernal game of chance? After I have gathered into my hands the threads of events, I can spin them to suit my plans." A smile, ill-boding and scornful, curled the Doctor's lips, and he added: "Sin-laden woman, in my hands now rests your daughter's fate; let us see what I am pleased to make of it."

"Halt!" cried a commanding voice, and the coachman, a thorough Russian, immediately reined in the fiery coursers. Wagner looked up and saw in the half-darkness Lothard, who stopped his horse at the side of the carriage. With one spring he was off his back and beside the Doctor.

"Drive on!" shouted he to the coachman.

"The horse?" the latter ventured to suggest.

"He can find his way home, or take whatever road he pleases. Now go ahead." A crack of the whip and the carriage flew onward.

"Well, Doctor?" said Lothard.

"The widow is very ill; I have not dared to leave her bedside for the whole day."

"And her daughter?"

"Is inconsolable. The mother seems to be so dear to her that the mere fear of losing her deprives the young girl of the power of enduring the uncertainty of the result. I think I have scarcely seen a greater anguish than hers."

"You must save her mother's life. I will recompense you in a princely man-

ner. No sorrow must befall this angel."

"Herr Baron, my duty as a physician I fulfil towards friend or enemy, poor or rich; and your gold avails nothing with me in this respect."

"I know that and forgot —"

"That all are not mercenary."

"Hush, Wagner! Do you not see that I am excited? Had this woman been my own mother, her illness could not have occasioned me greater anguish than I now feel. But why did you leave her?"

"Because my presence during the night was unnecessary."

"Who helps the daughter watch? Ought you not to send one of the many women from Kronobro to assist them?"

"It is unnecessary; Professor Aberney is there, and he who will have a relative's right is also the most tender and considerate sympathizer in all that concerns the inmates of Ektorp. One needed only to see with what kindness he treated the young girl, to understand that she possesses in him a friend and a support."

Lothard sat silent; darkness concealed the shadows which the Doctor's words called forth. In silence they continued the remainder of the way. Lothard tormented himself by recalling what the Doctor had said about Aberney's attachment to Skuldfrid. He reproached destiny with bitterness for disposing affairs so badly, that he could not be at her side.

When the Doctor, quite early the next morning, entered the widow's abode, he was surprised to find Skuldfrid's appearance completely changed. Her unrestrained grief of the day before had given place to a deep resignation. One could divine that the heart still trembled from the same anguish, but that she now tried to bear it with religious steadfastness and submission. There was no weak bending before the blow of sorrow, but her whole demeanor gave evidence of

courage in the moment of trial, which inspired respect. The hours of the night had from the bosom of weakness developed all that soul-strength and moral courage which should grace her in the future. The first grief came so suddenly, so unexpected, and in a moment when she felt so happy, that it affected her like a thunderbolt. Aberney's words and the past night, during which he had spoken earnestly with her about the world of which she knew so little, and which was so full of trial, had awakened the slumbering powers in her soul. When Aberney ceased talking, and Skuldfrið sat by her mother's bed contemplating the features so dear to her, reflection came and whispered to her many things to which feeling had turned a deaf ear before. Fire tempers steel, suffering the soul. The first severe grief that Skuldfrið experienced roused to full life her energy and trust in God. It was now clear to her mind that nothing was gained by tears and lamentations, and she prayed from the depths of her heart, —

"Father, give me strength to bow patiently beneath thy will."

The child had become a woman. Wagner thought this when he regarded her.

In the forenoon the violent delirium again returned, and then Skuldfrið was obliged to leave the room. The Doctor had said to Aberney, —

"During these attacks I consider it best that only I and the old servant remain with her."

Without a word of objection or dissatisfaction at not being allowed to stay, Skuldfrið obeyed; but instead of sitting inactive and listening to the distressing shrieks as on the previous day, she began to attend to all necessary matters and to fill Annika's place in the household. Aberney bade her seek rest, but she shook her head, answering that it was impossible.

Silent, with perfect self-control and an untiring solicitude for the sick one,

Skuldfrið lived through seven long days, during which no change took place in her mother's condition. Aberney and Tage had with unwearied zeal and kindness assisted them. Skuldfrið was grateful and friendly to all, but spoke little and appeared perfectly calm, especially when she was sitting in the sick-room. On the seventh day the wild delirium seemed all at once to subside. The sick woman fell into a calm sleep; and when, after a couple of hours, she awoke, her mind was perfectly clear. The Doctor had said that none but Annika and Skuldfrið ought to be with her, so that no emotion of surprise or fright should affect her unfavorably in her weak state.

It was towards the twilight of a beautiful August afternoon. Annika, wearied out with exertion, had leaned back in the corner of the sofa and fallen into an uneasy slumber. Skuldfrið sat on a stool by her mother's bed, with her eyes fixed upon the sleeper. The setting sun threw a few pale rays into the room through the lowered shades. All was still and quiet both within and without. Skuldfrið, with clasped hands, was breathing an humble prayer. Just as she had whispered a devout amen, her mother opened her eyes and fastened them on her daughter. The look was clear. Skuldfrið's heart beat so violently with joy when she saw in the large dark eyes a tender expression, that her voice trembled as she asked in a half-whisper, "Beloved mamma, how are you?" She pressed her mother's hand to her lips.

"Have I been sick?" said Fru Smidt, in a feeble voice.

"Yes you have been very, very ill." Skuldfrið's eyes were now full of tears. "How do you feel now?"

"Well, only somewhat weak and heavy in my head."

Annika awoke; and after Skuldfrið had calmly and carefully explained to her mother that a physician had been called, and that he was waiting in the

saloon to learn her condition after the slumber, she went, without waiting for her mother's permission, after the Doctor. Fru Smidt's eyes glided with their usual soulless expression over the Doctor's features. If he had formerly known her, it was yet very evident that *she* did not recognize him. She answered his questions very briefly, and after he had given some directions he left the room. To Skuldfrid he said, —

"Your mother, Mademoiselle Smidt, is now out of danger. Try only to prevail upon her to be calm, and I hope she will soon be entirely recovered."

He advised Skuldfrid to seek repose, and assured her that when Fru Smidt had taken the powder he ordered, she would sleep quietly the whole night. Aberney also insisted that Skuldfrid should go up to her room and restore her strength by a good sound sleep. He said this in so tender and yet so decided a tone, that Skuldfrid was obliged to obey. Annika also urged the "child" to do as the old folks said. She, Annika, would watch that night. In short, Skuldfrid in the evening went up to her room, after she had seen her mother fall asleep.

Tage, who had been at Ektorp the whole day, drove home in the evening, but Aberney remained. After Skuldfrid had uttered a warm prayer of gratitude to God, she slept the calm sleep of a child. She had not rested for eight nights.

Aberney stole into the sick-room while Fru Smidt slumbered. In the night she awoke, however, and called Annika.

"I should like to see *him*," she whispered.

"The Professor?" asked Annika.

"Yes."

Aberney instantly stood by the bed and reached her his hand with the words, "I have watched over *Skuldfrid's mother*. Suffering expiates so much."

"Thanks!" faltered the sick woman; then she made a sign to Annika that she

wanted to be alone with Aberney. The old woman went out into the saloon, where she lay down on a sofa and fell asleep. Not until the first rays of the sun streamed into the room did Annika awake, and when she went into the sick-room she found Aberney sitting by the sufferer's side, holding her hand clasped in his. Fru Smidt was in a deep slumber. The Professor's calm and serious features bore traces of painful and agitated feelings. But we will leave them, to see how Skuldfrid is getting along in her little maiden bower.

The young girl's habits of life were simple and natural. One of these habits was to rise early. She was like the birds who with their happy twitter greet the rising sun. This morning she awoke as usual at sunrise, and although she felt strengthened by the rest and thankful to God for her mother's recovery, still the glance with which she greeted the king of day was melancholy. She stood a long time by the open window, and looked out over the blue surface of the water with eyes full of tears. She felt so miserable within! She found herself so entirely alone in the wide world, and yet this seemed to her ungrateful. How deeply and fervently Tage and Aberney loved her; this she had realized more plainly than ever during her mother's illness. How then was it possible to feel this void in the heart which agonized her, this vague longing which filled her whole being? Skuldfrid, the glad, smiling, and light-hearted Skuldfrid, who displayed so much fortitude in the day of trial, felt an irresistible need of weeping over something, what she did not know. Weep now, when God had been so merciful and restored her mother's life; now, when her whole being ought to be filled with gratitude and joy! Strange human heart, which is never satisfied.

One and the same image returned continually to her soul, and it seemed to her, as she stood, that all would again become bright and smiling, if she could for a single moment see those dear features again, or hear that voice utter some friendly words. She had not heard it for so long. Just as this wish, first vague, then defined, arose within her, she heard a soft rustling in the hedge beneath the window. Skuldfrið started and looked down. Had God heard her timid prayer, or was it destiny that met her desire? That is a question which we cannot answer. The certainty was, that Lothard stood there, so pale and with a look of the deepest sympathy fastened upon her. Skuldfrið's features were tinged with that rosy hue which an agreeable feeling always calls forth. She leaned forward a little and smiled cordially at Lothard as he took off his hat and saluted her.

"It has been a very sad time," said he.

"Very," faltered Skuldfrið.

"All danger is now over, is it not?"

"Yes, God be thanked!"

"I have come here to beg of you one thing."

"And that is?"

"That while duty and feeling still keep you by the sick-bed, you will allow me, who can only share your anxiety from a distance, to write to you and to receive from you at least a few words of comfort." His request was accompanied by a look so tenderly beseeching that Skuldfrið's answer was, "*Yes*." In a few minutes afterwards Lothard had gone, and Skuldfrið stole with light steps down the stairs and to the side of her mother, who still slept with her hand resting in Aberney's.

Two hours later the Doctor arrived, and found Aberney by the sick-couch. The Doctor's eyes lingered with an inquiring glance upon Fru Smidt's features, as if he wished to read what had passed. Once, while he was asking her

some questions, he changed his accent, so that his voice assumed an entirely different character. At the sound of it the sick woman started and looked at him with trepidation; but a strange face smiled at her, which could not possibly have any connection with the voice of which his reminded her. At the Doctor's departure Skuldfrið followed him. When they found themselves alone in the saloon, he handed her a letter with the words, —

"If you have any interest for the writer, then prevail upon him not to spend his nights here before your dwelling." Wagner bowed and left.

The whole day passed without Skuldfrið's finding a moment's leisure to read the precious epistle. Not before evening came, when her mother fell asleep and Aberney and Tage returned to Junta, could she glance through these lines which had lain hidden by her beating heart. What did they contain? Ah! Precisely the same as a thousand other such letters, with the only difference, that while other young men discoursed about love and claimed love in return, vowing an eternal faithfulness and demanding the same, Lothard spoke only of his fervent affection, how precious every moment was in which he could see Skuldfrið, how he revered and admired her, etc. The word "love" was not mentioned, neither was there a single syllable about a reciprocal attachment. In spirit the letter was warm, in expression surprisingly guarded; the whole revealed his heart's noblest feelings, with a delicacy of which only the one who truly loves is capable.

Skuldfrið wrote some lines in reply. They were few and did not at all touch upon herself. The greatest difficulty for her was to get this letter into the Doctor's hands. She could never raise courage to give it to him. The Doctor saved her the trouble, however, for on leaving he said, "Have you been so good as to

write what I asked you yesterday?" In reply to this Skuldfrid handed him the letter.

In the course of two weeks Fru Smidt had almost recovered from her illness, suffering merely from the weakness which a violent attack always leaves behind it. She had spent several hours daily in the little porch to inhale the fresh air and recruit in strength. Although the Doctor declared at every visit that she could be considered well, and that nature no longer needed the assistance of the medical art, he continued notwithstanding to call at Ektorp every day. One afternoon as he returned he went (according to custom) up to Lothard, who always awaited his return with impatience. The young owner was not in the large saloon, but the Doctor found him in a side-room absorbed in the perusal of a letter that he had just opened. At Wagner's entrance he threw it on the table and went to the Doctor, inquiring, —

"Well, Doctor, have you any comforting words for me?"

The Doctor silently handed him a little billet. Lothard went to the window to read it with his back turned to Wagner. During the interval the Doctor's eyes were directed to the letter which Lothard had thrown on the table.

"Again that close and elegant lady's hand, which I from instinct detest. An inner voice tells me that the writer is the one who has weakened my influence. During the many years since I knew that he received letters in this handwriting, I have not been able to find out from whom they came."

With apparent indifference he approached the table and took up a newspaper laying upon it, and at the same time cast a glance at the first lines of the letter. They were, "Mon bien

aimé Lothard!" The Doctor could not catch more, for Lothard turned round. Wagner was now entirely absorbed in the newspaper.

"Doctor," said Lothard, "do you know whether anything especial has occurred at Ektorp?"

"No, everything is the same as usual. The Professor is there every day and young Tage also. Fru Smidt seems to be governed by the former and treats the latter with especial kindness, something which is extremely rare with the gloomy woman. The daughter is again the same glad child as before the mother's illness, and one need not be particularly sharp-sighted to discover that those two young people have begun to understand each other; a result to which the Professor contributes."

The Doctor looked thoughtfully before him. Lothard regarded Wagner with a suspicious look, which the latter did not seem to remark. There was quite a pause. At last the Doctor said, —

"I have to-day resolved not to visit Ektorp any longer. As a physician my calls have long since been unnecessary, and I will no longer play *postillon d'amour*. I have done this from friendship for you, thinking to prepare you some joy, but now —"

"Why do you break off?" said Lothard with a flushed brow.

"Now, I am afraid of occasioning some evil both to you and the young girl, if I continue further."

"And the reason?"

"Because she is to become young Abnerney's wife. However one may regard the matter, from a reasonable or moral point of view, you must admit that it is happier for her to be married to a respected and honorable man than to —"

"Spare me your interruptions and speak out plainly." Lothard was impatient.

"Very well, as you please: than to become your mistress."

"My mistress!" exclaimed Lothard. "Are you insane, Doctor, or for what do you take me?"

"For a Russian nobleman, with a warm, susceptible heart and strong passions; but with sufficient judgment to understand that the poor widow's daughter is not a girl that can become Baron Canitz's wife."

"And what should hinder it?"

"Your different social positions. You would through such a missalliance incur your Czar's displeasure."

"Bah! A Canitz can marry whom he chooses, without fear of the Emperor or anybody else."

"Do you believe that? I rather remember that —"

Lothard struck his clenched hand on the table and gazed silently at the Doctor with a look full of restrained anger and pride, the effect of which was that Wagner stopped abruptly, and instead of finishing his sentence, he said, —

"Then you have actually cherished the thought of marrying Mademoiselle Smidt?"

"No, I have thought nothing with reference to the future. I have lived in the present, without troubling myself about the next moment, because I have not dared to desire anything for fear of losing the little I possessed of her good-will; but now I feel that if she gave me her heart, nothing in the world would keep me from making her my wife."

"And still there lies a letter which begins with '*mon bien aimé Lothard*,'" thought the Doctor. He said aloud, —

"But even if you possessed her heart, it would avail you but little, for out of friendship for young Aberney she could be easily persuaded to give him her hand, thus fulfilling not only her mother's, but also her old friend Professor Aberney's dearest wish. Yes, I frankly confess that I consider this union so natural and promising, so lastingly happy for the young girl, that I no longer wish to be

letter-bearer or a means of drawing her interest from young Aberney."

"You do not?" All the blood rushed to Lothard's head.

"No! When to-day, at my arrival, I saw the two young people sitting in the garden, with her head leaning against his shoulder and his arm around her waist, it seemed to me that they were created for each other, and I thought, at his side she will soon forget the interest she now feels for the Baron. When the Professor afterwards kissed her tenderly, it appeared to me as if those three beings were created to live a long and happy life together."

Lothard's jealousy was in full flame.

"So, you thought that; but I think that Skuldfrid is too uncommon a girl to be thrown into the arms of the son of a political intriguer, like Aberney. The father can always be regarded as having the retributive hand of the Russian authorities held over him."

"That can be remedied by letting them know that attention is already directed to the Professor. Besides, he can go over to Sweden and there in undisturbed peace enjoy his son's happiness. There have been moments during the past days when I have been tempted to warn Aberney."

"Ah! that only is lacking for you to betray me, and yet you know how indispensable *she* is to my peace. You, who know my temperament and my whole character, have understood from the very first moment that I loved this girl with my whole soul. What infernal treachery would it not have been to favor young Aberney's suit! Ah! I believe, if you had done that, I would crush you."

"The fault, were I to act thus, would be your own," replied the Doctor, calmly. "You have once declared that you did not consider me your friend, consequently you can have no claims upon me as such."

"You have however been my confidant,

the one who aided and also fomented my feelings," answered Lothard, hastily.

"The former I admit, but not the latter. I have rarely of my own accord spoken of the young girl, never instilled any hopes with regard to her. I have, on the contrary, warned you of Aberney's influence; but then I was accused of wishing to rouse the devil in your blood. Well, Baron, the result of it all is, that I do not consider myself obliged to serve your interests, when everything that I do is regarded by you as a *stroke of rascality*. Now may *the one* who has taught you to distrust me also advise you as well as I could."

Lothard's breast heaved uneasily. His whole soul revolted at the thought that it only needed a few words from Wagner for Aberney to travel over to Sweden and take Skuldfrid with him, leaving Lothard a prey to all the furies which now raged in his breast. She, Skuldfrid, had leaned her head against Tage's shoulder, while he held his arm around her waist. His blood boiled at the thought of it, especially when he considered that he had scarcely dared to touch her hand. To the Doctor he said, —

"Forget my words if they were unjust, and show that you have some interest for me by not going over to my rival's side."

The Doctor regarded him a moment; then he took the proffered hand, saying with emphasis, —

"I shall not warn him."

"Good!" Lothard went to the table and hastily wrote some lines upon a paper, which he sealed and gave to the Doctor with the words, "Send that by post."

The Doctor held the letter in his hand and looked at the address; then he said to the young man, —

"What do you hope from an interview with Tage Aberney? That he will go back to Sweden and resign his bride, or do you actually believe that you can

persuade a *Finn* to give up what he desires? Better then to quietly get him and his father out of the way."

"Wagner, do not raise this abominable thought in my soul. I prefer rather to send a bullet through his head and —"

"Have Skuldfrid abhor you and bewail him. Try for a moment to consider your situation and conduct with some degree of sense. You love the young girl. She entertains for you a lively interest, but not strong enough to resist the powerful influence that her old friends have over her. You would brave everything to give her your name and a social position far above the one which is now offered her. In short, you desire her happiness as well as your own; but you will never succeed so long as the enemies of the Canitz family have power over her. They hate Russia and the Russian yoke, while they love Sweden. What then is simpler than for you, who are aware of this, to procure the Professor and his son a passport to leave Finland within twenty-four hours. Have you injured them by so doing? No. They do not send such to Siberia, like the poor Polanders."

What the results were of this conference will soon be seen. After an hour's conversation, the Doctor left the Baron's room and took his way to his wing.

The night was far advanced, and still Lothard walked up and down the large saloon in the most perturbed state of mind. The letter that he had been engaged in reading at the Doctor's arrival was entirely forgotten. It was with Lothard as with all persons whose feelings are worked to their highest pitch, the whole activity of the soul is concentrated upon the object which called forth the excitement.

Lothard had for several evenings ridden to the neighborhood of Ektorp and

stolen to the place in the wood from whence he could see what passed in the yard, and then he had seen Tage and Skuldfrið together. Add to this that ever since the morning that he had exchanged a few words with her through the window, he had not been able to see her for a single instant, but had been obliged to content himself with the few lines that he obtained in answer to his long letter, and it will be easy to see that his anxiety would pass all bounds, especially, as Skuldfrið in her letters never spoke of her feelings or of anything which could refer to her regard for him. The last letter which the Doctor had brought had however differed from the previous ones, and, added to all the rest, had occasioned the above-described conversation. The letter contained the following:—

“You are troubled. Your words have a shade of sorrow and sometimes of bitterness. From what does this arise? Am I the cause of it? And yet I would so have liked to be an agreeable object upon which your thoughts could dwell. Ah! there is much that I desire, I too; but I feel myself like a bird that has been deprived of its greatest treasure, freedom. Still I ought to be happy, very happy, for—Forgive me that I cannot tell you all. Know only that I now hold my mother’s peace and happiness in my hands. She has said that the means of her joy are at my command. And yet I tremble. But that must be because I am a child, unacquainted with everything and to whom *all* is new. No, I will not write any more now, and yet I had so much to say to you. Who can tell how long I shall have the right to receive or answer your letters? Farewell, and forgive me if I have occasioned you any sorrow!”

Twenty-four hours count as nothing in the great record of eternity, and yet how many revolutions may occur in a human life within this short space of time!

This night, which afforded no rest to

Kronobro’s wealthy and handsome owner, had been to Skuldfrið like all others. She fell asleep with her thoughts on the stranger, although she would have wished to think of Tage. During her sleep she was neither rejoiced nor troubled by any unquiet dreams, and when she awoke in the morning she had not the smallest idea that that day would be the signal for all the storms that were destined to ravage her life. She greeted the rising sun with the same weary longing which now abided in her heart.

After breakfast Fru Smidt said to her daughter,—

“My child, you have for my sake so long neglected poor Mother Veronica and the forester’s wife, that it would give me pleasure if you went to see them.”

Two hours after this Skuldfrið was on her way to the forester’s. A silent presentiment told her that she might meet the stranger on the way. She was not deceived in it; for she had not taken many steps, before, to her great surprise, she met Lothard in the lane. He did not usually come so near the house. When she saw him Skuldfrið quickened her pace, and exclaimed gladly,—

“How good it was of you to come here just to-day!”

“If you had not happened to take a walk, I would no longer have remained outside the gate, but forced myself into your dwelling to get a chance to speak with you,” answered Lothard. “Ah! you do not imagine what torturing days and nights I have dragged through.” He passed his hand over his forehead.

“But, what is it that so torments you?” asked Skuldfrið.

“My love for you, Skuldfrið.”

“Well, do you see, I am only to you a source of suffering, and yet I would wish to be the reverse.”

Lothard took her hand and drew her to the little bench at the side of the road, which was hidden by a large bush.

“Sit here and listen to me,” said he,

in a tone which showed how agitated he was. "Ah, Skuldfrið, you comprise all of life to me; a heaven of bliss into which my thoughts have not once dared to venture, and an abyss of misery too deep to be conceived of. Give me therefore a single ray of hope, that — ah, forgive me, suffering makes me bold — that you may some time come to love me. I will wait patiently for the day, even if it should not dawn before my death. Only let me delivered from the thought that you love another, that you will become another's wife; for these ideas have almost changed me into a wretch." He shook his head as if he would expel all the vagaries that tormented him. "Tell me," continued he, "if there is no way for me to win your heart. Name the sacrifices you demand, and I will submit to them, if I can only gain your tenderness." He took Skuldfrið's hand. "I have never during my whole life known what it was to love, or to be attached to another with my whole soul; you are the first one who has taught me of this heaven and hell. I have never had father, mother, sisters, or brothers. You are the only one to whom I am attached, and without you I could not live." He pressed her hands hard in his.

Skuldfrið's cheeks changed color constantly. She smiled at him gently yet sadly, and whispered, —

"Your words again almost frighten me, and yet they find an echo in my soul. Hush, do not interrupt me, but try to hear me calmly and patiently. Sit by my side," continued Skuldfrið, and drew her hands from his. "You ask me for a glimpse of hope. What can I give, that you do not already possess? You love me. Ah, those words once filled me with trembling, then with gladness, and every time I have repeated them in my memory, my heart has beat faster with joy. I then felt clearly that you were dear to me. Perhaps too dear," added she with lowered voice; "and yet you are to me

such a stranger, that there are moments when it seems to me that I ought not to think so much of you as I do. Do not interrupt me. I have thought seriously of us both during the weeks we have been separated. Surrounded by so much tenderness as I have been, my ungrateful heart still felt a great longing for you. You have become indispensable to my life. For your happiness I would sacrifice my own; but for my mother's peace, my uncle's desire, and Tage's future, I should without consideration sacrifice both you and myself. Ah, the feeling with which I am attached to you does not give me the right to occasion suffering to any one but myself. It exists only to be sacrificed." Skuldfrið laid her hand on her heart, and added: "It seems as if something would burst within me, the day you and I were to part, and yet that day must soon arrive —"

"Skuldfrið! Skuldfrið!" cried a voice from the gate; the two young people turned round, and Skuldfrið rose immediately, saying, —

"My mother!" She gave Lothard her hand and added with a look that filled his breast with jubilant joy: "Farewell till to-morrow!"

She jumped over the ditch and hastened to her mother. When she had hurried away Lothard rose to (if possible) catch a glimpse of the woman who had given Skuldfrið life, and about whom there were so many strange reports.

Leaning against the gate stood Fru Smidt, awaiting her daughter's approach. Her face was turned toward the lane. Lothard, who was only a few rods from her, could distinguish her features very well. The young man turned aside the branches of the bush, but let go of them immediately, murmuring, —

"O my God! That haggard face, what memories does it not recall in my soul! No, it cannot be *she*. Some hellish illusion mocks me." He again bent down the branches with a quick motion. Fru

Smidt remained standing quietly until Skuldfrið reached the gate.

"Two faces cannot be found so alike," stammered Lothard, and sank into thoughts which in the beginning seemed to be very painful; but finally he shook his handsome head to free himself from them, and an expression of beaming joy flew over his face as he whispered: "What matters it to me who gave her life? *She is now mine.* Neither the powers of heaven nor hell can snatch her from me, since I know that her heart belongs to me. Could I ever cease to love her, this pure and noble girl, because she is *a child of crime*? No, were she born at the foot of the scaffold, she is herself an innocent dove. Skuldfrið! Ah, how much that name contains!"

Lothard rode home to the stately Kronobro, for the first time in his life abandoning himself to youth's mocking illusions of future happiness. His heart beat with joy when he in fancy saw the moment when he should carry the gloomy widow's daughter to Kronobro as his wife. With what splendor would he surround her, and how much happiness would his love bestow! It was the first time that the young man, so liberally endowed by nature and fortune, felt truly happy; the first time that felicity thrilled his soul. Lothard had forgotten *everything* that could accuse him of not having acted right. He had only the consciousness that Skuldfrið held him dear. What did he care if there were others for whom she considered it her duty to sacrifice him; these others should no longer stand in the way; and as for the mother, Lothard did not at all think of her. He had Skuldfrið's assurance, and in this assurance he fancied himself to possess *all*.

O youth, season of hope, how bitterly do we not regret thee, when thou hast fled with thy treasures of *faith and trust*, when the heart has not yet learned to

fear *just that which hope pictures the most beautiful.*

However smiling or sorrowful a day may begin, it yet has an end, and night comes to hide in its embrace either our joy or our grief. So was it with the day when Lothard fancied that his breast could not contain the world of happiness that opened before him.

Some neighbors had been invited to dinner, and the proud and reserved host at Kronobro was beaming with gladness. His conversation flashed with genius and wit. Dr. Wagner, who was among the guests, threw from time to time a peculiarly mocking and derisive look at Lothard's handsome face, which happiness had made yet handsomer.

"Intoxicate yourself with the shadow of felicity, the awakening will be all the more terrible," thought the Pole.

After dinner all the guests departed. The Doctor had said that he was obliged to call on a patient, and when twilight fell Lothard found himself alone. He sat in the large saloon, absorbed in those dreams which so agreeably flatter the imagination of the happy lover. The servant had lighted the apartment as usual, but the Baron had not noticed it. He was not conscious of the flood of light that streamed down upon him, so completely was he detached from the outer world. He was however recalled to it by the entrance of a servant, who announced that a young lady desired to speak with the Baron.

"Who is she?" asked Lothard, displeased at being disturbed.

"She will not give her name, but affirms that she has something of importance to say."

"Let her come in." Lothard rose from his recumbent position on the sofa and ran his hand through his dark hair, saying to himself, "Young! then it cannot be —"

The door opened and the servant said, "Be so kind as to walk in. The Baron sits there, and is all alone."

A tall, slender woman with downcast eyes entered. The door was closed after her; she had stopped directly before it. She and Lothard were alone. He rose and turned to her, but started and looked almost frightened at his guest, exclaiming, "Skuldfrið."

Before we describe the scene which now followed, we wish to throw a glance back and see what had transpired at Ek-torp, after Fru Smidt called her daughter.

Skuldfrið had immediately left Lothard and hastened to her mother. When she entered the gate, Fru Smidt handed her a letter that had been sent from Junta by a messenger on horseback. It was of the following import:—

"MADAM: A great trouble forces me to ask you to let Skuldfrið come to Junta immediately. I address myself to you, so that you may send for Skuldfrið if she should be out when this arrives. The moments are precious.

"With all respect,

"SARA HEDERMAN."

After Skuldfrið had rapidly glanced through these lines, Fru Smidt said: "I have told Anders to harness up. Go, and pray God that nothing may have befallen *him*!"

In a few moments Skuldfrið was on her way to Junta. It seemed to her that the road was interminable, and she tried to divert her anxiety and impatience by recalling to her memory the words that Aberney had spoken to her during her mother's illness.

"In the moment of trial a human being best shows whether he has soul-strength and is a good Christian," he had said, and she wanted to be strong;

she would meet with perfect self-command whatever awaited her at Junta.

On reaching the place, Skuldfrið hastened to the saloon, where she found Aunt Sara on a sofa crying. At the sight of Skuldfrið she started up and threw herself upon her neck, exclaiming, "My God, child, what a terrible misfortune; they are gone, gone!" She burst out in sobs.

"Gone! dear good Aunt, speak and tell me what has happened?" begged Skuldfrið with trembling voice.

What she asked, however, was no easy thing; for only after many exclamations and floods of tears did Skuldfrið succeed in finding out what had occasioned these demonstrations of grief. The events were these. While they were at breakfast, the sheriff, attended by the sergeant of the district, had presented themselves and requested to speak to Professor Aberney and Tage. They had been shown into the Professor's room. After a short interview, during which the sergeant seized all Aberney's papers, they came out again, and Aberney told Aunt Sara that he and Tage were obliged to take a journey to Abo immediately. Aunt Sara, who, while the gentlemen were in Aberney's room, had kept an open ear at the keyhole, heard distinctly that the sergeant spoke of a punishment for life and Siberia. Yes, she could risk her life upon it, that he said that Aberney and Tage were to be sent there.

To be sure, they had both told Aunt Sara when they left not to mention a word about their going to Abo in company with the officers, but that she should say for the present that they had taken a journey on business; but when her two favorites were gone, she could not stand it to be alone, but sent directly for Skuldfrið, to pour out her heart to her, and if possible find some way of saving them.

Aunt Sara had got it into her head that she and Skuldfrið ought to follow them to Abo, and that the latter should

go to the Governor and plead for their release. Skuldfrið was young and beautiful, she thought much of Aberney, and was as good as Tage's betrothed; this circumstance, according to Sara's supposition, would move the Governor; and if anything ought to have the power to awaken his compassion, it would be a despairing *fiancée*. All Aunt Sara's hope of release was based upon the result of Skuldfrið's effectual petitions to the Governor.

Skuldfrið sat pale and thoughtful, listening to Aunt Sara's proposition. Instinct told her that this was nothing to build upon, and that she would be utterly unable to effect anything by it. That something ought to be done she saw plainly; but what her inexperience could not tell her. In the mean time Sara entertained her with the most tragic descriptions of the fate of those who incurred the displeasure of the Russian government. The appalling pictures that Sara drew about the knout and Siberia were enough to make one's hair stand on end and the heart quake. Just as Aunt Sara was thus exciting her own and Skuldfrið's imagination to the highest pitch, the rumbling of a carriage was heard, which drove up in the yard.

"Perhaps they have returned!" exclaimed Skuldfrið, and started up. She opened the door and hurried out to the porch, but stopped there with an expression of disappointed hope in every feature; for the new-comer was Wagner.

The Doctor went to meet her politely, saying that he had sought Mademoiselle Smidt at Ektorp, for he had learned that Professor Aberney, on account of some political suspicions, had been taken to Abo by the authorities. As he did not find Skuldfrið at home, he had looked for her here, to advise her as a friend to go to Kronobro, request an interview with the Baron, and relate to him all that had occurred, soliciting his intercession for Aberney.

"He is all-powerful, and a word from him is sufficient to free the Professor," said the Doctor. When Skuldfrið told him Aunt Sara's proposition, he proved to her that such an appeal to the Governor was utterly fruitless. The Governor, as one in office, must do his duty; Baron Canitz, on the other hand, as the especial favorite of the Emperor, could with the greatest ease free Aberney from all the dangerous consequences of his political mistakes.

When the Doctor had gone, Skuldfrið's resolution was taken, and she drove to Kronobro, where we now return.

At the sound of Lothard's voice, Skuldfrið looked up frightened, fastened her eyes upon him with an expression of horror, and taking some hasty steps forward, seized his arm and exclaimed, "You are then Constantin Canitz!" Skuldfrið's face had become deadly pale, her lips trembled, and the large dark eyes gazed at him with despair.

"Yes."

With a gesture of actual abhorrence, Skuldfrið drew her hand from his arm, and hiding her face in her hands she murmured, —

"O my God, have mercy upon me!"

"Skuldfrið," said Lothard, sadly.

"Does my name so frighten you? What matters it if I am called Canitz, for you I am and shall always remain the 'Lothard' who loves you even to idolatry."

Skuldfrið remained motionless. Lothard continued in a tenderly beseeching voice, —

"Forgive the weakness that made me conceal who I was. Ah! I knew that the knowledge of it would make me hated, and I wanted to be loved. Turn not away, but say that you forgive me."

Skuldfrið's hands had slowly fallen from her face. Lothard tried to take one of them; but at this movement she

drew herself away, raised her bowed head proudly, and fixed upon him a cold look, full of dignity. With an unnaturally calm voice, she said, —

“Baron Canitz! I know you not; to-day is the first time we meet. I have come here to beg your intercession for Aberney.”

There was something in the whole attitude of the young girl that chilled Lothard's blood. His heart was seized with anguish when he met her cold gaze, and it seemed to him that he was under the influence of some painful dream. But a moment since his heart had been so filled with felicity, that it was now difficult for him to comprehend the change her manner indicated. Those eyes, which in the morning had smiled at him so lovingly, were they actually the same that now looked so disdainful? He heard her words, but did not understand them. He felt only that he must know if his name had killed in her the feeling that had made him so happy. What were all other things, which bore no reference to Skuldfrid's love, to Lothard? Nothing.

“What you now say to me I cannot understand, before I have heard some expression of forgiveness from your lips. O Skuldfrid!” exclaimed he, passionately, “do not look at me thus; what wrong have I done? Loved and worshipped you as a higher being. A single word of kindness, one word that tells me that you are the same as when I saw you this morning, and then you can command my life.”

“Could I with such a word save my mother's life or my own honor, I should not be able to utter it. You are no longer the one you were to me, — the *man* I loved. You are Baron Canitz, and to him I have come to ask his powerful assistance to save Professor Aberney and his son. They have been taken to Abo upon some political charge. I have come to petition the favorite of the Russian

Emperor, that he may save my unfortunate countrymen. You can do it, and on my knees will I implore you.”

“You pray, and you hope to be heard,” said Lothard gloomily. “You, who refuse a friendly word to the one whose whole peace depends on it. You demand a service that might cost me life and freedom; and that, in the same moment that you cast my heart from you with disdain. You petition Baron Canitz and reject Lothard; the same name that you appeal to to save your friends contains death to your love.”

“Yes, this name can save my friends, but I cannot love the one who bears it. He belongs to a family who have plotted against Finland's liberty, who have betrayed their fatherland; and Canitz is the name of the one who in his rude brutality once shamefully abused me.” Skuldfrid added with bitterness: “I could die of grief when I think that only a few hours ago I felt proud to possess Constantin Canitz's love. To the arrogant Russian descendant of a degraded Swedish family, Skuldfrid cannot yield her heart.” She drew her breath and added with clasped hands: “Assist my friends, save them from misfortune, and restore them to me and Finland!”

“Listen to me, Skuldfrid. I cannot restore your friends to you, even were I to sacrifice my entire welfare to do it. He who has conspired against the Russian government cannot be saved.”

“Cannot,” rejoined Skuldfrid, “say rather that you will not. O my God, how could I for an instant cherish the delusive hope that you, a Russian, a Canitz, could be magnanimous! I ought to have expected a refusal from a man who —”

“Why do you cease?” asked he in a voice that quivered. “Strike the blow, crush me, tear my heart asunder, trample me under your feet, and then return, followed by the consciousness that you have destroyed the peace of a human

being. Girl," added he violently, "you do no injustice to the cruel blood you have inherited."

"Baron Canitz," interrupted Skuldfrið, coldly, "this is not a question of you and me. What *has been* is no more. You are to me a stranger, to whom I have come to seek assistance. You can, but you will not render it. Well, then, I will go. Take the triumph that *I* have entreated you in vain for a good deed, which presupposed a magnanimity impossible for a Russian. Now I have nothing to add." Skuldfrið turned towards the door.

"Stay a moment and hear me! You who speak to me so contemptuously forget, however, that this wretched Canitz has you in his power; that he could abuse this power if he were a low person, who despised honor and virtue and only listened to his passions."

"To what then do you listen, when you will not help my friends?" said Skuldfrið, with that immovable firmness in her attitude which is so peculiar to the Finnish people.

"I cannot assist them."

"You will not. Baron Canitz, may God forgive you this refusal!" Skuldfrið moved towards the door, but Lothard reached it before her.

"Then you are going, without a single friendly word, a single kind look?"

"Yes!" Skuldfrið looked at him proudly. "You suffer me to go unheard, although you know that the misfortunes, the sufferings of those for whom I have prayed is far harder for me to bear than the grief that has befallen me. You could restore their freedom, but you prefer to let me revel in my misery. And yet you dare speak of your affection for me. Ah, it is an abominable mockery."

"If it were a mockery, then I need only to turn this key to have you in my possession." He laid his hand on the lock. "I have said that I am not able

to do what you ask of me. You doubt it; you refuse me a single poor word of comfort for all that I suffer. You scorn me, whose love has been so holy and earnest, that I have never with even a gesture allowed myself to be led by anything but my reverence. Well, then, if grief or indignation now drove me to keep you in my power, it would be an excusable act." He paused a moment, then added in an almost melancholy tone: "But if I did that, I should not love you so deeply as I do. You are dearer to me than my own happiness, even at the moment you reject me." Lothard stepped aside. "Farewell, may you never repent the hardness you now show!" He bowed.

Skuldfrið was agitated. The tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Give freedom to my friends, and I shall bless you!"

"Bid me die at your feet, and I will do it; but do not ask the impossible."

"Yes, impossible for a Canitz, but possible for a man with a noble heart," exclaimed Skuldfrið, and opened the door. Lothard stood motionless until it was closed after her, then he hastened out through another.

In Kronobro court-yard stood the little unpretending equipage in which Skuldfrið had arrived. Anders was taking his comfort and slept soundly upon his seat, holding the reins in his weary hands. A servant called out to the slumbering coachman and helped Skuldfrið into the chaise. The evening was dark, the sky cloudy; and the wind sighed through the trees, indicating the approach of a storm. Just as the servant had very attentively buttoned the cover over the young girl, she heard a clear and well-known voice call from the steps, —

"Saddle my horse immediately."

Skuldfrið wrapped her shawl about

her. She shivered, whether with cold or grief it were difficult to decide. She wished to ask Anders to drive quickly away from this place that had swept away her joy, but she could not get a word over her lips.

Anders was only half awake and needed some time to come to himself and get control of the whip and reins. He then drove at a gentle pace out through the gates. When they opened, Skuldfrið heard the tread of a horse which was led up to the entrance. She pressed her hands hard over her beating heart. A horse now came galloping after them. When they had gone a little distance, the rider was at the side of the chaise.

"Be not afraid," said a voice so soft and sorrowful, that it seemed to Skuldfrið that its tones penetrated deep into her heart; "I do not intend to torment or pursue you with my presence, I shall only see you safely home, so that nothing may happen to you."

Hot tears rolled down Skuldfrið's cheeks; but Lothard did not suspect them, the darkness concealed and the wind kissed them away. Had her life depended upon it, Skuldfrið could not have answered a single word.

Lothard rode in silence by the carriage, while the god of the storm let loose his wings. Not a word was exchanged during the drive, and when the chaise turned off at Ektorp, Lothard said, —

"Farewell!"

"Thanks!" faltered Skuldfrið in a voice so low that the howl of the wind completely drowned it, and it failed to reach the ear for which it was intended. He swung his horse round and hurried off at wild speed. Skuldfrið had wanted to call him back, to say to him some friendly words, but too late.

Night superseded day, and Skuldfrið was sitting alone in her little chamber. The flickering flame of the candle threw its tremulous light over her pale features, on which so much deep and bitter

grief was depicted. All who had been dear to her and whose presence rejoiced her were now gone. Skuldfrið felt so dejected, so deeply unhappy, that she would have given much to have one sympathizing breast to lean upon, or a single kind voice to whisper some words of comfort.

It was as if a whirlwind had swept over her life and scattered all her joy, leaving only anguish, hopelessness, and despair. Her dearest friends were threatened with a terrible fate, and she was unable to do anything for them; she, who with her life would have purchased them freedom from every pain. And then, this man who had become to her so unspeakably dear, so indispensable, he had deceived her, had smuggled himself into her love and confidence, and was the same Canitz who had ill treated her and Tage; the same man whom she had detested from childhood, whom she had learned to despise as the son of a traitor. All this was a heavy burden for the untried soul, especially as, in spite of it *all* and to her own humiliation, she could not divorce her feelings from him. It seemed to her that she could have died of shame over her weakness in loving a person that she ought to despise. Besides, she was tormented by the gnawing thought that his often-expressed envy of Aberney and Tage might have been the cause of his refusal to assist them. Thus she became responsible for it, and at this conclusion she was assailed by the bitterest self-accusations.

Skuldfrið was not generally of those who have tears or weak complaints at hand for all reverses, but it seemed to her that the tortures she was now suffering would have been mitigated if she *could* have wept.

At last towards morning the angel of sleep had mercy upon the poor child, and folded her in his embrace. When she awoke from a short and uneasy slumber, the day was far advanced. She found on the table beside her bed a somewhat

bulky letter. The address was in Aberney's handwriting. She opened it with alacrity. The envelope contained two sealed letters and one unsealed. She unfolded the latter immediately, but her cheeks became as white as snow when her eyes fell upon the well-known handwriting, those fine and beautiful characters which had been a joy to her to see, but which now only filled her heart with bitterness. She read : —

"You told me yesterday that you came to Baron Canitz in the hope of saving your friends through him from a threatening danger.

"You, a young and beautiful girl, sought the presence of this man, the only being you abhor on earth. Nothing but a strong affection could have induced you to take such a step, and this you cherish for these *two men*. You forgot your fear for a Canitz, and you crossed his threshold ; his, to whom you consider every bad deed possible.

"What then did you hope to effect with such a person ? Did you hope to move him through your prayers ? Then you assumed that he had a heart open to compassion. The one who can feel sympathy, who can be moved by a prayer, is not a depraved being ; and yet this is your opinion of Constantin Canitz.

"You came, convinced that he was to you a stranger, with whom you had once an unfortunate meeting in your childhood. You came, unmindful of the danger to which you exposed yourself, when you ventured alone and unprotected into a man's dwelling, trampling at the very threshold upon all conventional requirements, as well as incurring the risk of being misjudged and of losing the respect of others. You forgot everything, except the danger which threatened those you loved.

"How deeply ought I not to detest them for all the affection they possess ; and be assured I do. Yet, it was not of this

that I wished to speak, but of this despised Russian Canitz, without magnanimity or compassion, as you expressed it yesterday, — this man who loves you, never mind how much, I believe he has told you that.

"You were in his power ; you insulted, irritated, and wounded him with your words ; you did everything to change all his better feelings into a wild tumult of fierce, revengeful passion. He had the power to follow the lower impulses ; and notwithstanding that you allowed yourself to trample inconsiderately upon his holiest feelings and his honor, this *Russian* did not forget the respect he owed you or himself ; and although every drop of his blood boiled from wild jealousy, from offended pride and scorned love, he let you go away without uttering a word in retaliation for all the tortures you made him suffer.

"Skuldfrid, during the terrible moments of our last interview, I felt that my soul was nobler than yours. I revere and love you, and you, you treated me with infernal cruelty. I have never felt so proud of myself as when I let you go, after all this. I had conquered my lower nature. Mark, imprudent child, that I only needed to speak a single word, a word that several times hovered upon my lips, to have you humiliated and crushed, and yet I did not utter this word, this terrible secret. God grant that I may always have the power to hold it back, and be on your guard that you do not again draw the strings of my soul in the manner you did yesterday ! Once it was possible to hinder them from snapping, not twice.

"After you had destroyed my peace and scattered the short and pure dreams of happiness I had lulled myself into, you left me, without a word of mercy or of sympathy, although I begged it of you. You went away, fearing that I would take my revenge upon these men, for whom you came to intercede. These

enemies to my happiness and peace, the authors of all my misery, you actually hoped that I would save, and not show any vindictiveness towards them. You dared much, when you irritated a Canitz; for the same man, on whose all-powerful influence you counted to deliver them, ought to have caused your heart to tremble when you affronted him. He could with his word have increased their misfortune. Admit that you must attribute to him a magnanimity which has not fallen to the lot of every man.

"At this moment I have before me a correspondence, which if it fell into any other man's hand would cost Professor Aberney his life. I need only to send it to the Governor; but in place of that I send it to you, and that notwithstanding that I hate these Aberneys with heart and soul.

"Moreover, I have travelled the whole night to seek them, and to procure you the enclosed letter from these friends who are so precious to you. I have so used my slight influence that the misfortune which has befallen them is limited to an order to leave Finland within forty-eight hours. They go to Sweden.

"You prayed for their life and freedom. I replied that I could not assist them. Ah! the miserable Russian would rather be overwhelmed with your reproaches than give you a hope which he was not certain of realizing.

"Now, your friends' lives, freedom, and property remain untouched, no matter at what price. They live, they are free; are you satisfied?

"This act of mine ought to atone in some measure for the atrocity which was committed by the boy,

"LOTHARD CONSTANTIN CANITZ."

Skuldfrið sat as one petrified after the perusal. This letter, so calm, so earnest, so dignified, was yet signed by a name repugnant to her. All this nobility had Constantin Canitz shown, he whom she

had always regarded as a type of wickedness; and finally, this Canitz and Lothard were one and the same person. Skuldfrið acknowledged that he had shown himself magnanimous. At the recollection of all the inconsiderate words she had uttered the evening previous, she realized fully the nobleness of his behavior in sending her the letters of the Aberneys. However unacquainted Skuldfrið was with the simplest conditions of life, her reason told her, as she glanced through two or three of them, that their contents would have been disastrous in the extreme for Aberney. With a feeling which she could not account for herself, Skuldfrið pressed Lothard's letter to her heart and whispered, —

"Until death will he remain dear to me."

The sound of steps on the stairs made her conceal the letter. Fru Smidt entered. She very seldom visited Skuldfrið's room, never except when the daughter was indisposed. She now looked anxious.

"You have had a letter from Aberney? What does it contain?" asked she.

Skuldfrið colored. She had not opened it.

"I have not yet had time to read Uncle Aberney's letter," answered she, handing it to her mother.

"No, you read it, my child!"

It was not very long and merely contained some encouraging words. He bade Skuldfrið be in good spirits, and assured her that they were well. He added that, as soon as he had arrived in Sweden, he would write to Skuldfrið's mother and propose to her to remove there. The letter ended with some warm assurances of fatherly affection. When the perusal was ended, Fru Smidt said gloomily, —

"I remove to Sweden? Never!"

She left the room, and Skuldfrið was left alone to read the letter from Tage. It was written by a swain who was separated from the beloved of his heart. He

gave and exacted promises of love and eternal fidelity, at the same time doubting the possibility of Skuldfrid's continued affection, and yet praying for her tenderness, as the only means of enduring the pangs of separation. Demanding and entreating, complaining and comforting, all within a few lines. The whole letter gave evidence of a disturbed state of mind, and a harrowing fear of losing the heart he believed himself to possess.

Ungrateful woman heart! Although every word in this letter breathed of deep and fervent love, Skuldfrid read it through quite abstractedly, and when she folded it she said, "Poor dear Tage!" But then her thoughts took another direction. What astonished her in Aberney's letter was the complete contentment he evinced at the idea of residing in Sweden. Tage wrote quite boldly, that as it was now impossible for him to come for his bride, the bride must go to him. The tone of both Aberney's and Tage's letter quieted Skuldfrid with regard to their fate and condition of mind. As her anxiety was stilled, her thoughts returned by degrees to the first letter and its writer. She read it through once more, and again arose those mingled sensations of joy, humiliation, and grief. The deep abhorrence she had imbibed for all who bore the name of Canitz, the recollections from childhood which were indelibly engraved in the proud and wilful soul of this child of nature, all called forth a bitter struggle against the feeling of admiration which his conduct inspired.

That the one she regarded as an enemy to her people and country could be so much to her heart was something which the Finnish girl could not pardon in herself.

Some days elapsed. Autumn had begun to show its sombre face. The wind blew and it rained continually.

It was gloomy at Ektorp. Skuldfrid spent the days almost exclusively in her room. Fru Smidt lived shut up in hers. Annika was silent and low-spirited. She had once said, —

"God only knows how it all will end! Skuldfrid does not know what sorrows and anxieties her mother has. Happy for her!"

Skuldfrid asked no questions. She knew from experience that Annika never gave any answer; but the young girl felt still more troubled and depressed. Were not all gone who had given her joy, all whom she had dared to approach in love and confidence?

The third day a message came from Aunt Sara, asking Skuldfrid to come to Junta.

On her arrival there she found the old lady dejected but calm. She was now already to follow her nephew to Sweden, but desired before she left Junta to take leave of Skuldfrid. The young girl stayed with her the whole day.

Sara was unusually communicative. She spoke quite openly and unreservedly, as she had never been in the habit of doing.

"I would most certainly have preferred to die here in Finland," said she. "All my youth and the greater part of my mature years have been passed in Sweden, but I have always cherished the hope that I could end my days in my beloved fatherland. Yet it was not God's will; for where Victor lives, there must his old aunt live too. He has never been quite happy here since Finland came under Russia, and it is not to be wondered at; but he thought he could serve his countrymen, and therefore he remained. Poor Victor! His life has been filled with sorrow and trial." Sara sighed.

She felt an irresistible need of lightening her heart to Skuldfrid. She had no friend and had never possessed one. She was generally sparing of words and

sharp towards strangers, though she could be both voluble and pleasant with her nephew, Tage, and Skuldfrid. Not even to the latter, who was her especial favorite, had she ever before alluded to the past or to Aberney's trials. Now it seemed to her, after these days of complete solitude and anguish, that her heart was filled to the very brim. The past, with all its losses, presented itself before her soul; and as Skuldfrid was the only woman she held dear, the need of seeing and talking with her became very great. She knew Skuldfrid, and felt assured that all she said to her was faithfully guarded.

"You must know, my child," resumed Sara, "that Victor Aberney and I are the only ones left of two unhappy families, who have been heavily visited by misfortune. Victor's mother was my sister. I had also a brother who was a much-esteemed man. God bless him!"

The tears now stood in the old lady's eyes. With a slow voice, as if afraid of her recollections, Aunt Sara began to relate all the events with which we acquainted the reader in the Introduction; about Harmen's union with the oldest Aberney, his death, and Harmen's marriage with Enoch, as well as the latter's unhappy end.

Skuldfrid listened with interest to the sad family story, and when Sara paused a moment, to control her emotion at the remembrance of these nephews and nieces whose experience had been so unhappy, Skuldfrid asked, —

"Well, Aunt, what became of the poor widow of the two brothers? I mean your niece Harmen."

"Ah, my child, I do not know. Victor went immediately to Sweden at the intelligence of Enoch's death, but what took place between him and Harmen I do not know. When he again came home and I inquired after her, he replied in a stern and gloomy manner, —

"Aunt, Harmen is dead; at least she

is to us. She is a criminal woman whose name must not be mentioned by any right-minded person.

"What discoveries he had made I did not seek to find out; I suspected them and kept silent. If I have ever since then happened to mention her name, he became angry. Once I dreamed that Harmen came to me and asked me to forgive her. In the morning I took courage and related my dream to Victor. He replied, —

"There are crimes that cannot be forgiven; such are Harmen's."

"But if she was miserable and in need?" I returned.

"She will never be in need, and deserves to be miserable. Do not speak to me about that creature."

"Remember, she bears your brother's name," I persisted.

"That I shall always regard as a disgrace; but I beg of you, Aunt Sara, do not speak of that woman; it only puts my blood in a tumult."

"That same year I learned by accident that she and her child, for she had a child by her last husband, had lived in Russia for some time with —"

Aunt Sara stopped and began to cry.

"With whom?"

"Ah, Skuldfrid, my dear girl, that is my especial grief." Aunt Sara wept bitterly. "You see my other niece, Edith, was my darling, my joy, and it also went unhappily with her. She drew upon herself the ill-will of the family, but for what reason I lack courage to tell. In short, she lived in Russia. I, who loved her with all my heart, could not cast off the poor child, and so I continued to write to her. It was with her in Russia that Harmen stayed for a time; but one day she disappeared from her sister's home, leaving no trace. Since then we have never heard her spoken of."

"And Edith, does she live?"

Aunt Sara looked frightened, grasped Skuldfrid's arm hard, and whispered,

"She has followed her husband to Siberia. It is now ten years since then."

"Has nothing been done for the unfortunate woman?" asked Skuldfrið, shuddering.

"O, yes, Victor has tried in every way and manner. He has even spoken with the late General Canitz, to effect through him some change in her fate; but the General answered, 'As long as I live, she shall remain where she is.' Dear child, beware of all of the name of Canitz, they are terrible people. That family brings misfortune and a curse with it. They feign virtue and beautiful acts, to cheat their victims; they are people without conscience or faith, destitute of heart and feeling. My poor Edith, my poor child, she has had to experience that. Since Victor talked with the General, he has no longer wanted to hear anything about Edith, for she has, according to his conviction, deserved her fate."

"And why so?"

"Her first offence I will not tell you, only Victor and I know of that. The second consisted in her marrying a *Russian*, one of those who helped to take Finland. I have prayed and cried very much that her sins may be forgiven her; for you know that to love those who are the enemies or oppressors of our country is a very grave sin, and God punishes those who do so."

"But," said Skuldfrið, with her head leaning thoughtfully on her hand, "why did General Canitz answer, that she should not leave Siberia as long as he lived?"

"Because he was the cause of her husband's being sent there, precisely as his son is now the cause of Victor's being banished."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Skuldfrið.

"My conviction. Beware, my little Skuldfrið, of young Canitz. I suspect that he has removed your friends, only

to harm you unmolested. Distrust every word, every action, good in appearance; it only hides deceit. And Victor often used to say, there is no honor or faith in a Canitz, they play with these to promote their evil designs. One thing is certain and that is, that never would an Aberney wish to hear your name mentioned, if you showed good-will or affection for a Canitz. Let these words of mine stand as a warning in your memory, if he should wish to take advantage of your lonely and forsaken position to make you his victim."

In the ardor of her outpouring, Aunt Sara failed to notice how Skuldfrið's face changed expression.

In the evening, after a tender farewell and an earnest exhortation from Aunt Sara that Skuldfrið should in all matters conform to Victor's wish, Skuldfrið returned home.

The night was dark, and the rain pattered against the window-panes, when Skuldfrið again entered her own room. While she sat there alone, listening to the howl of the storm, she recalled to her mind the sorrowful and calamitous events Aunt Sara had related, and General Canitz's words about Edith continually resounded in her ears, that she should remain in Siberia as long as he lived. All the warnings that Aunt Sara had set forth came to distress and torture her heart.

A whole week had gone by without a word or a glimpse being received of the owner of Kronobro. The day after that in which Skuldfrið took leave of Aunt Sara, the pastor called at Ektorp. A letter from Fru Smidt was the occasion of his visit. After a long private conversation with the widow, he took dinner with her and Skuldfrið. During the meal the pastor said, —

"Well, Kronobro has now again be-

come deserted. The young Baron left the estate in the beginning of the week and returned to St. Petersburg."

A plate fell ringing to the floor. Skuldfrið had dropped the one she was to receive from Annika.

When the pastor was gone, Fru Smidt said, "To-morrow I shall take a journey to Abo."

"You, mamma!" exclaimed Skuldfrið, frightened. "I hope I may go with you?"

"No, you must remain at home. My presence in Abo is necessary. It concerns business."

"But —"

"No objections, my child. I *must* go."

Fru Smidt patted her daughter, and regarded her with that expression of grieved tenderness which almost always lay in her glance. Then she went into her room, and Skuldfrið, impelled by her disturbed feelings, took a shawl and went out for a walk. She took the direction to Junta. How glad and happy had she not always before gone that way, and especially during the summer that had fled like a meteor! How beautiful and smiling had not life seemed to her! And now, now the bright dream had left only shadows behind it. Every bush upon the way reminded of *him*. She set down upon their usual resting-place, and leaning her head on her hand she repeated continually in thought, —

"He is a Canitz; he is now far, far away, and my good friend is gone, and all are gone who brought joy with them!"

It began to grow dark when Skuldfrið returned from her walk. At every rustling of the wind in the leaves and branches she stopped, listening with trembling and anxiety; and then continued her way, murmuring, —

"What do I fear or hope. Is he not in St. Petersburg?"

When she entered the yard at Ektorp,

an elegant equipage stood there. A servant, clad in the Canitz livery, held the reins.

"The Doctor!" thought Skuldfrið. "Does he come with —"

She went into the entry, but stopped, listening. In the saloon a man was talking quite violently. It was not the Doctor's soft and insinuating accents, but a rude and disagreeable voice. Skuldfrið heard him say, —

"This is the last time that I remind you. Tell your mistress that if she does not pay the rent before the week is out, that I have had orders to eject her. The Baron has patience long enough with her irregularity. Before the week is ended the whole amount must be paid, or else it will be as I said. That is the Baron's express order."

The door opened, and Skuldfrið had barely time to avoid being thrown down by its force. A man of repulsive appearance came out. He passed Skuldfrið without salutation, but looked at her beautiful face with a shameless effrontery which drove the blood to her cheeks. Annika followed him.

"My God, what have I heard?" exclaimed Skuldfrið when the steward from Kronobro stepped into the carriage. "Is not Ektorp my mother's property? Does she stand in debt to — to — Kronobro? Annika, answer me, speak for God's sake! O, why, why keep all these secrets from me?"

"Hush, in Heaven's name," whispered Annika. "Your mother would feel terribly if she thought that her child knew anything about that."

"But, Annika, I must know all, or, what will become of me?" said Skuldfrið, in so vehement and determined a tone that Annika looked at her quite scared.

"You shall know all about the matter, if you will only keep silent and not act as if you had heard it. Believe me, my mistress would only have one stone more added to her burden."

Skuldfrið went up to her room. Annika had promised to follow her directly.

Reality began to take hold of the young girl. The happy ignorance concerning life, in which she had hitherto lived, was ruthlessly destroyed by circumstances which tore all her bright illusions to fragments and scattered them to the winds.

After a little while Annika came up. During the whole time Skuldfrið had paced the floor.

She had hitherto supposed her mother to possess sufficient property, and had always regarded Ektorps as her estate. Debts, cares, and need were things which Skuldfrið had never thought of, except when she was engaged in some mission of charity. And now to whom did her mother stand in debt? Alas, to this Canitz, to Lothard. By whom was her mother now threatened with ejection? By the very same man who had so solemnly assured her that there was no sacrifice which he would not make for the promotion of her happiness; by the same man who wrote that letter, so full of noble dignity. Aunt Sara was then right; everything good and magnanimous that came from a Canitz was dissimulation and deceit; only the low and bad was true.

Motionless as a statue, Skuldfrið listened to Annika's account of her mother's affairs, how she shut herself up in her room, and worked to earn money. She had, through the pastor's influence, obtained copying occasionally, and his wife often provided her with sewing. Fru Smidt did not wish her daughter to be burdened with care.

"The only thing," said Annika, "that sustained her courage in the struggle with sorrow has been that she was allowed to work for her child in silence, while Skuldfrið only needed to sun herself in life's gladness, cultivating her mind and her talents, without any material cares.

The tears ran down Skuldfrið's cheeks while listening to Annika's words, which revealed to her the devoted love of her mother. Annika demanded of Skuldfrið that she should not let any one know that she was aware of their true pecuniary condition.

"But," said Skuldfrið, "what will mamma do for the rent?"

"I do not know. She has declared positively that she will pay it before the end of the week. She is probably going to Abo on that account."

"If my good friend had only been here," said Skuldfrið.

"Child, your mother would die before she received such a service from an Aberney," replied Annika impulsively.

"And why so?" said Skuldfrið, looking at her inquiringly.

"Do not ask me, dear child. Believe me, it is best for you to know nothing. Life is sometimes a very sorrowful thing; but God is good, and his will guides all for the best."

"Amen!" sighed Skuldfrið, devoutly.

Quite early in the next day Fru Smidt went to Abo. Skuldfrið spent the whole forenoon in working on a beautiful piece of embroidery which she began with the intention of giving it to Aberney on his birthday, but which she now decided to sell.

During the night which followed her conversation with Annika, she reflected upon the past and future. The result of these meditations was that the young girl resolved to devote her life to work. She would, like her mother, quietly seek to contribute to their common support. This new aim had a very favorable effect upon Skuldfrið's state of mind. It gave her a purely material interest, a zealous endeavor to make the oppressive burden of care lighter for her mother. It seemed to Skuldfrið that she could have knelt

before all the self-abnegation which lay in her mother's conduct.

The complete revolution which this discovery of their actual pecuniary position occasioned had aroused to full activity the slumbering energies in Skuldfrið's soul, developing all the strength and power of action with which nature had endowed her. She realized that her mental afflictions must be pushed back into the depths of her soul, and that they should not be allowed to exercise an enervating influence upon her mind.

After a day's assiduous application the twilight fell. Skuldfrið laid aside her work to take a moment's rest, when she heard steps on the stairs, as well as Annika's voice speaking to some stranger whom she tried to make understand that he could not see Skuldfrið. All opposition was in vain, however, for the person said, —

"Say that my master has news from Professor Aberney."

In an instant Skuldfrið was in the hall.

"Is it any one with news from Professor Aberney?" exclaimed she.

Annika stood on the upper step, but before she could answer the voice from below said, —

"Yes, it is a gentleman who comes directly from Abo."

Skuldfrið flew down stairs. In the entry stood a neatly clad man, evidently a servant, although he wore no livery.

"Ask your master to be so kind as to walk in," said Skuldfrið, and went into the saloon.

In a few moments the door was opened by Annika, and a tall, slender young man entered the apartment. It was half twilight; but even if it had been still darker, Skuldfrið would have recognized this careless yet noble bearing, the singularly *high-born* figure and manner.

In the joy of receiving news from her dear friends, Skuldfrið had taken a few steps towards the stranger, but at the

sight of him became motionless as if struck by lightning.

When Annika had closed the door after him, he went with hasty steps towards Skuldfrið, saying, —

"Do not let my presence frighten you. The most hated person can sometimes bring a pleasant message, and this is the case with me. I have a letter for you."

Annika now came in with a light.

Skuldfrið had meantime recovered her self-possession, and with a cold though polite gesture she invited the guest to be seated.

Old Annika looked at the child with a wondering air, and thought as she stepped out again, —

"Goodness alive, what has come over the child? She looks as grand as if she was a queen. Hm, hm!"

Lothard thought, as he seated himself at a little distance from her, —

"Can this really be the same playful, smiling, and light-hearted child that I saw such a short time ago? Could a few days have so changed her? And yet how adorable she was then, and how fearfully beautiful she is now!"

When they were again alone, Skuldfrið seated herself and said in a calm voice, —

"I am astonished, Herr Baron, that a letter from my friends needs to go through your hands."

Skuldfrið carried her beautiful head proudly. Lothard's presence brought to her soul with startling clearness the fact that she spoke to *her mother's creditor*, the same man who threatened to eject the poor widow if she did not pay her rent. Skuldfrið's breast was filled with indignation. Perhaps this man came to see her prostrated and humiliated by the consciousness that her mother was dependent upon his pleasure; or did he hope, this rich Canitz, that the daughter of the poor widow would be brought so far as to be obliged to supplicate for her mother? However it might be, he

should never in this respect have his desire gratified. She was filled with the deepest contempt for the miserable revenge he had wished to take.

Lothard had delayed a long while before he replied to her words. There was something in the cold tone that wounded him, because he knew that he did not deserve this reception. He needed a few minutes to get free from the unpleasant impression they made upon him.

"Professor Aberney," began Lothard, "is suspected by the Russian government, and therefore he considered it most advisable to entrust this letter to a reliable messenger; he gave it to one of his friends at the moment of his departure from Abo. This friend, who was too much afraid of his own safety to dare to forward it, gave it to the Governor. The latter, in his turn, opened it. When the Governor, an old friend of my family, found that the contents concerned Constantin Canitz exclusively, and not the state, he sent it to me and I have read it."

"By what right?" interposed Skuldfrið hastily, thereby forgetting completely her rôle of cold dignity.

"By the right the Governor confirmed when he sent it to me opened. It is very possible that you would never have received it, had not the hated name of Canitz been found in it; and verily no other than Lothard Canitz would have brought it to you, after having read these aspersions against his honor." He handed Skuldfrið the letter. "Wait a moment before you read it," added he. "I will tell you what this letter contains. Professor Aberney has in three long pages occupied himself wholly and entirely with me. He describes my family in such a manner, that you must be under some spell, if you still believe, after reading it, that anything of the honorable man can be found in the heir of all these base deeds. He warns you,

he conjures you, to avoid me, the representative of a family which Aberney regards as a curse for the earth to bear. And yet Skuldfrið, it is this 'wretch,' this *fidei commissaire* of all baseness, as your friend expresses it, who presents to you this letter, which I was at perfect liberty to destroy. I have come from Abo expressly to leave this in your hands. For me it was a duty to procure you intelligence as soon as possible from those you miss. Is this not to work against myself? This letter does not merely speak of me, but also of your union with young Aberney, of your journey to Sweden, etc. Thus if I am a bad man, I have at least not conducted myself so towards you."

"What do you call it to have denounced my friends?" asked Skuldfrið, who remembered Aunt Sara's words, and in consequence regarded Lothard's present conduct as only an artifice behind which he concealed some wrong intention. The exaction of the rent had given a strong show of truth to her words.

"Have I denounced them?" repeated Lothard, growing pale.

"Yes, you have; it is just you who committed this miserable act!"

"You are cruelly mistaken," said Lothard, gloomily. "For a moment it was actually my intention to do it. Yes, I was firmly resolved, but even then I conquered the temptation to gain an advantage by an unworthy act. It was the night before they were taken from Junta that I fought the battle between my lower and better feelings; in this moment I thank God that I am *not guilty* of the fate that has befallen them."

"I cannot and ought not to believe you."

"And what entitles you to doubt? What have you seen that gives you cause to consider me a man who audaciously utters an untruth?" exclaimed Lothard. His resolution to be calm began to stagger.

"Even if your visible actions did not entitle me to all possible doubts, then you bear a name which in itself comprises all that can be called faithless."

"Skuldfrid, be on your guard; weigh your words! I have once allowed myself patiently to be trampled under your feet, and as the only reply, wished to compel you through my conduct to give me your respect. I am, however, a human being with quick and violent passions. The injustice of your attacks could easily—mark, I warn you—drive me to an extreme which I should afterwards regret."

"Probably that of driving my mother from her home," rejoined Skuldfrid, bitterly.

"Skuldfrid!" exclaimed Lothard, and started up. "What do you say? What new and abominable act do you try to charge me with?"

"Baron Canitz, what do these words avail? You have once written that you could crush me with a word; but you are mistaken. The means by which you seek to crush me are too impotent to effect the result you refer to." She rose and added proudly: "And now we certainly have nothing further to say to each other."

"Be so kind as to resume your seat," returned Lothard, this time in a decided and almost commanding tone; "we have not yet said all that we have to say to each other. Tell me, Skuldfrid," added he, in a softer voice, "can you not forget that Lothard bears a name that is hateful to you?"

"No, it is impossible," answered Skuldfrid, looking coldly at the young man.

"Impossible?" repeated Lothard, and his look grew dark.

"Yes, impossible. The Lothard I held dear a short time ago has disappeared, and I shall never find him again in Baron Canitz. To attempt it would be in vain, for we do not love that which we do not respect, and I cannot possibly esteem the

owner of Kronobro; my heart cannot be given to General Canitz's son."

"You cannot love General Canitz's son, you say?" repeated Lothard. A dark flush covered his pale face and his eyes flashed fire. "But I—I can love you, notwithstanding you are the daughter of a woman branded as one who poisoned her first husband, and through this crime became the cause of her second husband's death."

"You lie!" Skuldfrid seized his arm convulsively.

"I lie! Can Harmen Aberney's daughter dare to say that?"

Lothard had written: "May God preserve you from ever pronouncing the terrible words which trembled upon my lips"; but he did not imagine the dreadful effect they would have.

For a moment Skuldfrid stood motionless, as if struck by lightning; then she fell to the floor with a terrible cry of anguish. She lay lifeless at Lothard's feet.

At the sound of the piercing shriek the door was thrown open and Annika rushed in.

The next moment Lothard was driving at full speed on the road to Kronobro, to send Wagner to Ektorp, cursing the impulse that had made him utter these words, which had literally crushed *her*, the being whom he had wished to shield from every pain.

During the course of three weeks Lothard dragged forth his days at Kronobro, without a shadow of hope or a moment's relief from the agony that consumed him. The Doctor had during the whole time visited Ektorp daily. Skuldfrid was very ill, so he said, when he returned from there. To the anxious question, "How is she?" Lothard constantly received the same answer, "She is not yet any better."

We will not weary the reader with an account of Lothard's state of mind, be-

cause it were in vain to describe all the regret, self-reproach, and anxiety he endured.

One Sunday evening the young Baron sat in his cabinet, pale, wasted, and scarcely to be recognized. He was writing, — writing to *her*. Upon this letter he had written every day for three weeks. It was no longer a letter, but a whole volume. The Doctor had positively refused to take a single line to her during her illness, because she must not be excited.

The lamp threw its pale light over Lothard's joyless features. It was silent and deserted all around him. Suddenly the stillness was broken by the sound of a carriage which drove up in the court. At hearing it Lothard raised his head and listened. His look was directed towards the door, with intense and painful expectation. Steps were soon heard in the room without, and directly after Dr. Wagner walked in.

The Pole's smiling face had that evening a triumphant and derisive expression.

Lothard, too much absorbed in his own anxiety, did not observe it, but cried to the Doctor, —

"How is she to-night?"

"Well," answered the Doctor, and handed him a letter. There was an extreme malevolence in Wagner's tone; and Lothard, who just that moment looked up, shuddered involuntarily at the expression of his face. He remained still, without receiving the letter.

"What fearful significance can that word have?" asked Lothard, and pressed his hand over his eyes. Then he started to his feet. "If you have failed to save her life, you shall take the consequences of my despair." He reached out his hand and seized a pistol that lay on the table. "Tell me quickly, does she live or is she dead?"

"She is alive and well," answered the Doctor. "This letter ought to convince you of it," added he, with a formidable smile.

The letter was instantly out of the

Doctor's hand, and Lothard read these lines: —

"When you receive *this*, Harmen Aberney's daughter has already left Finland. She went a week ago. Do not search for her; you will never find

"SKULDFRID."

Lothard uttered a cry of rage, and with a panther's agility he threw himself upon the Doctor, exclaiming, —

"Villain, you have deceived me! Had you ten lives, you should not be able to pay me for this!"

With the whole strength of his infuriated anger, Lothard seized the Doctor by the throat with one hand, while a weapon flashed in the other. Wagner closed his eyes; but just as the inconsiderate Lothard was pressing the trigger, some one grasped him by the arm; the ball went past Wagner's head and through the wall.

A voice, mild and melodious, exclaimed in French, "Unhappy boy, will you soil yourself in your tutor's blood?"

At the sound of this inexplicably wonderful voice, the pistol fell from Lothard's hand; he let go of Wagner and turned round.

Before him and the Doctor stood a tall woman, with a face no longer young, no longer beautiful, but with the expression of a saint. Her gaze rested on Lothard. It was full of a passionate tenderness and deep sorrow.

"Have you forgotten your oath?" asked she, and stretched out her hand towards him. "Have you forgotten, that whatever miserable act this man commits against you, you should never increase *the terrible debt* in which your forefathers stand to his family? The criminal's misdeeds must be atoned for by his child. You, the guiltless one, shall make amends for the wrong that has been done."

"O mother!" murmured Lothard in an inaudible voice, and threw himself upon his knees at her feet.

PART II.

THE direction of our life, the turn that we take for better or for worse, depends generally upon the reverses or sufferings that befall us. With many they have an irritating effect, with others the effect is crushing, and with a third class they awaken a true self-examination. To these last belonged Lothard.

He said once to himself, "What there is of good or evil within me I do not know, nor shall I before another strong and violent feeling has taken possession of my soul." He was right.

The attachment for Skuldfrið was not a caprice, that had sprung from the turbid source of wild passions, but it was rooted in the best and noblest soil of his heart. To come nearer to her morally, Lothard had forced to silence every ignoble feeling. He did not wish to purchase any advantage at the cost of what his better instincts rejected. Thus when, after the conversation with the Doctor, he had determined to denounce Aberney, and had written a letter to the Governor to this effect, he had at the very moment it should be sent refrained from an act which he considered unworthy. He would not avail himself of this manner of getting rid of persons whom he regarded as dangerous to his interests. No, he would not be indebted to any discreditable action for the favor he desired to win from *her*. In short, the letter was destroyed.

Before he rode to Ektorp to try to see Skuldfrið, he received a few lines from the Doctor, which informed him that all measures with regard to the Aberney affair were superfluous, as the Professor's own imprudence had already plunged him into ruin.

"So much the better," whispered Lothard's egotism. "I am then delivered

from their presence, without being the cause of their removal."

He then went to Ektorp to try in some way to meet Skuldfrið. The events that followed are already familiar to us.

We left Lothard at the moment when he threw himself on his knees before the unknown mediator. We will describe what took place between her and him.

After Lothard's smothered exclamation, the lady turned to the Doctor, signifying her desire that he should leave them. She spent the greater part of the night in conversation with Lothard. Towards morning the Doctor was sent for. Lothard, in consequence of the varied emotions to which he had been exposed, had had a violent rush of blood to the heart, and required bleeding. In a few hours the young Baron felt better, and in the afternoon he and the unknown lady left Kronobro, leaving the Doctor in a chaos of conjectures. He, who had regarded himself as holding the threads of events in his hands, who believed himself able to shape the fate of those whom they concerned according to his pleasure, found himself, just at the very moment that he hoped to plunge Lothard into an abyss of torture, deprived of his prey and left alone without power to solve the enigma before him.

Of the wild rage which seized Lothard at the intelligence of Skuldfrið's flight, not a shadow was seen when the Doctor, in obedience to the call, came to assist him; and when Lothard went away from Kronobro he had appeared perfectly calm, and on leaving offered the Doctor his hand with the words: "Farewell, Doctor, perhaps our ways may nevermore meet. Should this however occur, contrary to expectation, you can at least be assured that yesterday was the last time

you will succeed in driving my passions to such a height that neither my reason nor my will can restrain them. You must endeavor to forget the outburst of my anger, as I shall try to forget the cause that excited it."

In a few minutes after this Wagner found himself alone at Kronobro, alone with the broken threads of his intrigue, which required time, reflection, and perseverance to join together again. The Doctor, however, was not one to become inactive because he had suffered a defeat. No, were he to fail ten times, he would still begin again the eleventh, and sooner or later attain his object. We leave him to his fate, assured of finding him again further on.

Lothard went to St. Petersburg. The shipwreck which his most beautiful hopes had suffered, and his consequent grief, had for several weeks occasioned a complete disinclination for all activity. Shut up in his hotel, he spent the days either in pacing the floor, plunged apparently in deep meditation, or in lying on the sofa and gazing at the ceiling. During these weeks Lothard reviewed his whole past life, the indiscretions, the dissipations, and the arrogance which had characterized his youth; then came the burning enthusiasm with which he had become a naval officer, but which had completely died out when he began to examine the Russian relations. The consequence was, such a weariness of everything; that he lost the briskness, the animation and energy which ought to distinguish the mariner. This was his state of mind when he visited Kronobro.

The chivalric, the truly noble, the ideal had in Lothard an ardent admirer. But in vain had he searched for a counterpart of it in his surroundings.

When he had but just arrived at his estate, where he intended to abandon himself to his dreams and his melancholy, destiny threw in his way this charming child of

nature, this woman in whom beauty, culture, originality, and freshness of feeling united to form the engaging being who had so magically captivated his soul. Had Lothard been the subject of many previous fancies, Skuldfrið's influence upon him would possibly have been less powerful. Now she was his first real love. Until the day he saw her, not an hour's enchantment had bound him to any woman that he met in society; and for those who stood outside its circle he had a contempt so deep, that he did not bestow a passing thought upon them. He had been a dissipated youth, yet less from inclination than in consequence of the intoxicating whirl that pleased for the moment. The wild pleasures to which he abandoned himself in the university towns diverted him only so long as they possessed the charm of novelty, but afterwards lost all value. In short, Lothard's whole soul was attached to Skuldfrið, and he did precisely what thousands of young men with uncorrupted hearts have done before him, he became a slave to the attachment which ruled his soul, but a slave who did not dare to desire his freedom for fear of losing what he possessed. There was no sacrifice, no deed, so heroic that Lothard would not have attempted it to prove to Skuldfrið how deeply, how boundlessly he loved her. This very aspiration to be worthy of her in every respect and upon all occasions had made Skuldfrið's power so great over him; it had also made the grief so much the more intense when she undervalued his human worth, and thrust away with contempt all the proofs of his devotion which he offered her. It was in the paroxysm of indignation called forth by this lowering of his noblest feelings, that he had uttered the unfortunate words about her mother. The blow he then aimed against Skuldfrið afterwards fell back on himself, and destroyed completely his short but beautiful dream of their future happiness.

Lothard made no attempt to find out Skuldfrið's place of abode. He believed that he knew it, and had firmly resolved to refrain from seeing her again. Where could she, her mother, and the old servant have gone, if not to Aberney? And, if so, then she had herself decided her destiny; the die was cast, and Skuldfrið would become Tage's bride. The steps she had taken proved how deep her aversion was for Canitz; she could not even remain in his vicinity. Why then should he again throw himself in her way, and call forth fresh suffering?

After five weeks' complete seclusion in the large and magnificent capital of the Empire, Lothard had gained a decided and plain view of his inner condition, and also marked out the course he intended to follow in the future. It was not yet clear to him how he should be able to attain the aim towards which he aspired, but he saw plainly that he must leave Russia, that he neither could nor would remain there; but it was equally certain that he would, under no condition, abandon the country unlawfully and enter the service of another as a miserable deserter. No, he must efface the stain which adhered to his name by a strictly honorable life. He must show that he was innocent of the crimes of his forefathers, and that with the name he had not inherited their faithlessness and cruelty. Lothard's proud mind could not endure the recollection that *she*, the only woman he had loved and adored, had rejected him with disgust because he belonged to a family whose name every right-minded person ought to despise. He felt that there were powers within him which raised him above the multitude, and he must so regulate his life hereafter that people should do him justice. It was not servility to his rank, his wealth or influence that could satisfy Lothard. No, the aversion manifested by Skuldfrið had awakened a burning desire to prove, through his capacity and

stern principles, that he paid tribute only to the good and true.

"*She* has crushed my happiness, my belief in felicity, my hope for the future, in all that pertains to my heart. I have no object to strive for, as far as individual happiness is concerned. I must find a recompense for what I have lost in activity and in the proud satisfaction of having acted strictly in accordance with the laws of honor. Once I sought her, I could not live without seeing her, and limited my whole existence to loving her to idolatry. I suffered, I was absorbed in my passion, and could have died at her feet for a smile or a friendly word. She trampled upon my heart, she crushed it, and finally she fled. Very well, never shall I bring our ways together, nevermore shall I sue for her love; but never shall I cease to love her. Once more shall destiny bring us together, a presentiment tells me so; but woe unto me if I then take a step to meet her. The love she once rejected I shall nevermore offer her. And now out in the world, out so to act that I am free, and can greet the sea without this tyrannical yoke on my shoulders. There will I live and there die.

With this resolution Lothard appeared quite suddenly out in the world, and was greeted by his acquaintances in St. Petersburg. The months that had passed since they last saw him had changed his appearance considerably. The high brow, which before seemed so free and clear that no cloud could ever shadow it, had now that peculiar stamp of earnestness and reflection which real and deep suffering leaves behind it. One could see that some bitter suffering had embraced these temples, and that the kiss of grief had left a cold pallor upon the dome of thought. These lively and flashing eyes, from which so much arrogance and pride shone formerly, were now *cold* and clear as two stars which glittered in the firmament without yielding any warmth.

Those lips, which had always a mocking, ironical smile, were now earnestly closed, and an expression of sternness had remained upon them, as if suffering had there placed its seal. Each and all of Lothard's friends, superiors, and acquaintances observed this change in him, but none of them uttered a word. There was such a coldness in Lothard's whole manner, that they felt themselves held at a distance, and understood directly that every remark or inquiry would have been proudly repelled by the young Baron.

Lothard had firmly resolved that before the return of spring, with its whisperings of hope, he should be free and able to serve the people and the country he wished to call his own, and from which his ancestors' pedigree had arisen.

How this was to be brought about was something which chance would have to determine, and then all would depend upon whether this ruler of human destiny would favor Lothard's plans or not.

"I will without hesitation place my life at stake, for the possible gain of my freedom," thought Lothard.

Again some weeks elapsed. Lothard had not yet found any means of loosening the fetters that bound him to Russia. He had decided to address himself directly to the Emperor, and say to him that he had never regarded himself as a Russian, but that he in heart and soul as well as in blood was Swedish; that he wished to return to his proper fatherland.

Lothard was just engaged in attiring himself for the purpose of seeking an audience with the Emperor. Wealthy, and belonging to a family that had done Russia great service, liberally endowed by nature, he was a young man for whom the Emperor had great hopes for the future, and who therefore received es-

pecial marks of favor. Upon this favor Lothard now built his hope, slender though it was. When Lothard was nearly ready, his valet came in with two letters. One was from Sweden, the other from Finland.

Sweden? Lothard did not, to his knowledge, possess any acquaintance there, unless it were Skuldfrid. He regarded the letter with actual shrinking; and the same man who could have met death without flinching, trembled at the mere thought that this letter might be from *her*. For an instant he felt a flutter of hope, and the envelope was torn open. It was not her handwriting, it was a man's bold and careless chirography. Lothard pressed his hand over his forehead and murmured, "I am a fool!" Then he threw a glance at the signature. There stood, *Victor Aberney*. At the sight of this name, the blood rushed to his head and he crushed the letter in his hand with a gesture of anger. In a few seconds, however, he controlled himself sufficiently to be able to read what it contained.

"HERR BARON: Through a cruel necessity rendered unable to see you in person to demand an explanation of your conduct, I find myself compelled to employ this means, although I have but little hope that a man of your character will afford me the justification I require.

"I ask you, therefore, what has become of Skuldfrid? She has disappeared from the place where she and her mother resided, and it is you who have taken her away. You have, like an insidious seducer, smuggled yourself into the young girl's heart, and after you succeeded in removing me from her proximity, you have enticed the poor child and her mother to follow you. It is not the first time that such acts have been committed by your family.

"Do you remember our meeting in Abo, the evening before my departure,

when you almost forced me to give you a letter to Skuldfrið? I told you then that I did not expect anything less from your faithlessness than that you should either not let the letter come into her hands, or that you would use it for the furtherance of some miserable end. You answered me, 'When you have seen such a trait in me, then express your contempt, but until that day you have no right to distrust or insult me, and you could never be able to shield Skuldfrið so well from all harm as does my deep respect for her! You may call me a villain the day that anything false or faithless steals into my conduct towards her or any other person.'

"Such were your words. I did not believe them, because I never have believed a Canitz. Your behavior has proven that I was right. You are a villain, for you have beguiled the young girl into ruin, made her forget her friends and trample upon their honor.

"You may perhaps ask by what right I mingle in her affairs. By the right I possess as a near relative and her father's brother. You ought therefore to enlighten me without delay about the fate of my niece, and what lot you intend for her; in any other case, I shall through the Russian Minister here present the matter in high places, and you can easily perceive what the consequences would be of such a proceeding on my part.

"VICTOR ABERNEY."

Had any one given Lothard a blow in the face, had the ceiling fallen upon his head, it would not have occasioned the consternation which now seized him.

Skuldfrið had thus not gone to Sweden. She had not fled to her friends and relatives. What then had become of her? Where was she? Lothard was in a labyrinth of conjectures, from which he in vain sought a guiding thread. After many futile endeavors to find an explanation which could in some slight meas-

ure calm the excitement which the perusal of Aberney's letter had caused, he took up the one from Finland. Perhaps that would give him a ray of light, in the midst of the darkness that surrounded him. There was a mixture of jubilant joy and despair in the feeling that filled Lothard's breast; joy at the thought that Skuldfrið had fled even from these deeply hated rivals, that she was not Tage's bride, and despair over her traceless disappearance.

The letter from Finland was in a handwriting well known to Lothard. It was from Wagner, written in French, and of the following import:—

"HERR BARON CANITZ: You have several times told me that I was guilty of hypocrisy when I called myself your friend. You have for years regarded me with suspicion, and you have in all my words tried to find a pitfall into which I sought to lead you. I have borne all this as a man, fully convinced that you would one day be obliged to do me justice. When that day shall dawn I will not pretend to say, sufficient that it will come, and until then may you distrust me. It is not to change your opinion of me in the least that I now write to you; no, Herr Baron, it is to fulfil a duty.

"You know that at your father, the General's death-bed, there were none present except me and his now deceased valet. Consequently what was then said none but I know, as the grave hides the other witness. One hour before he drew his last breath he confided to me the enclosed letter saying, 'In the case my son, in some important period of his life, should desire to quit the Russian service, or if any hindrance to his happiness or prosperity should arise in consequence of his being a Russian subject, then give him this, and he is free. You must not place it in his hands before you consider him mature enough to determine his own acts with wisdom and discretion.

"I send you the paper entrusted to me, fully convinced that you have attained sufficient strength of character to judge of your own actions, and that you besides stand at a turning-point in your life, in which this paper may perhaps be of inestimable value. Poorly should I know the human heart if you did not just now desire to be free. I hope you clearly perceive that I on this occasion act as a friend, and not as an enemy. Had I been the latter, you would never have received this document.

"Now a word in conclusion. You consider me to have acted faithlessly in regard to Mademoiselle Smidt ; in this case I must submit to your injustice. I will however inform you of one thing, namely, that when you sent me to Ektorp to assist her, I found my patient more ailing in soul than in body. What had passed between you and her I do not know. It must have been something very terrible, for she repeated continually, 'That was then the great secret. O God, have mercy upon me !' For two days and nights she was completely out of her senses ; but on the third day when I came she appeared to me calm. She then forced from me the promise not to inform you of the resolution she had taken, and which she communicated to me, namely, to leave Finland. I gave her my word that I should not give you the letter she wrote, before eight days had elapsed.

"You will perhaps say that it was not treating you in the right way. Possibly ; but as a human being and a man with a heart I could not have conducted myself differently towards the young girl, who had resolved to die rather than see you again. Where she has gone I do not know.

"Now, Herr Baron, I have only to add that I will resign my position at Kronobro the same day that I obtain my discharge from the post of provincial physician. Our ways are thus separated. May you never have to repent the injus-

tice of which you have been guilty towards your former tutor,

"J. WAGNER."

Without a moment's delay Lothard opened the letter that was enclosed in the Doctor's. It was a document signed by the Russian Emperor, giving the heirs of General Canitz the right to leave the Russian service and return to Sweden, if they so desired it. To this however was attached the condition, that they forfeited all the estates and money they possessed in Russia. Kronobro they could keep as being an inherited estate ; but all that Russian generosity had given them as a pledge of its favor, and in recompense for the zeal with which they had served the country, must be relinquished the moment they left Russia.

If anything had power now to rejoice Lothard, it was the reading of this document. Had it comprised the loss of all he possessed, and compelled him to leave as a beggar the land in which he now enjoyed a princely fortune, he would have chosen to be a *free* beggar. No choice was now needed. Kronobro in itself yielded a considerable income. So he threw away with pleasure the fortune which his father and grandfather had acquired in a manner so unworthy. He did not wish to keep one *kopek* of it.

With his letter of liberation in his pocket, he went to the Emperor to announce his decision ; afterwards he would leave the Empire that he had never loved.

We will now see how life shaped itself for Professor Aberney, after he had been obliged to leave Finland so precipitately and established his home in Sweden. Aberney was in possession of no inconsiderable fortune, derived partly from inheritance and partly from his own endeavors. Shortly before the event

which resulted in his expulsion from Finland, he lost through a failure over half of his property. The remainder secured him from need, and in connection with his salary as Professor would have been sufficient for the satisfaction of his small wants, had not banishment deprived him of his place in the University. Consequently all that now remained was the revenue from Junta.

Aberney's first consideration, upon his arrival in Sweden, was to seek an engagement whereby he could profitably employ his unusual knowledge, at the same time that he was enabled to enjoy pecuniary independence.

There are men who, even if they had been placed among the most remote mountains of Lapland, would still, through their manifold attainments and superior ability, make their names so known, that the fame would extend far and wide. Aberney was a man of this kind; his scientific culture and his genius were as much spoken of in Stockholm as in Abo; and when he landed upon Swedish soil as an exile, he was received with open arms by Sweden, which always embraced every opportunity that offered to manifest its deep and undiminished regard for Finland and its sons. In short, the celebrated Finn obtained a situation as Professor (where or what it was is of no consequence). He had soon become so incorporated with his position, that he would have been perfectly contented with the new turn his affairs had taken, had not the painful intelligence arrived from Finland that Skuldfriid and her mother had left their former abode, without informing even the pastor of their whereabouts. Some days after their departure the pastor received a letter from Skuldfriid, in which she thanked him for all the kindness he had shown her and her mother, adding that various circumstances compelled them to leave their native land. The cause which led them to take this step made it necessary for Skuldfriid

to conceal the residence they should subsequently choose. In this letter was enclosed one addressed to Aberney, which she begged the pastor to forward to him.

The letter to Aberney was evidently written in an exceedingly agitated state of mind, and gave witness that the young girl was governed by bitter and painful feelings. She prayed Aberney so beseechingly, that even in the future when the truth was revealed to him, he should endeavor to think of her without rancor or anger. She said she would rather fly to the ends of the earth, than see his feelings towards her changed. She closed with these words:—

“... Dearer than all that I have hitherto loved have I held my uncle, and therefore it would be impossible for me to endure a change in his affection. The loss of all else I could bear, but never the discovery that I was no longer your dear Skuldfriid, and that there was anything between us that could separate me from my friend, my father. Ah, uncle, I fly, fly, praying God to let me keep the remembrance of your kindness and love as a consolation, for all that has been taken from me. Greet Tage and beg him to forget me. My weak and perverse heart was not created for him, but until my death shall I remember his love and yours as the dearest treasures life has possessed for me. Think without bitterness or ill-will of uncle's deeply unhappy
“SKULDFRIID.”

This letter filled Aberney with sorrow. What should he think? To what did she allude, if not to the weakness which made her abandon fatherland and friends? And what could that weakness be, if not her love for Canitz? The pastor's letter also referred to something of the kind. What was more natural than that Aberney should write to the man he considered to have played the miserable role of

deceiver. We know the substance of Aberney's letter.

Tage received the intelligence of Skuldfrið's disappearance with such outbursts of feeling, that Aberney needed all his power over the young man to make him use his reason.

This fancy, which from his earliest youth had attached Tage to Skuldfrið, had taken firm hold of his heart, and he could not conceive of any joy or happiness without her. He had never dreamt of any future felicity except at her side; and he had judged Skuldfrið's feelings so entirely by his own, that he had never for a moment allowed the fear of losing her to arise in his soul. And now, when he had relied so trustingly upon getting some warm, loving words in response to his letter, there came the intelligence of her disappearance. She had perhaps fled with *him*, that man who had stolen into her heart like a thief.

Aberney did not express any of his apprehensions to Tage, but at the perusal of Skuldfrið's letter they arose of themselves. Some weeks elapsed, during which Tage abandoned himself to his grief, his jealousy, and his resentment, when he fortunately received orders to go to Carlscrona to do service there.

New objects as well as constant occupation dissipated his grief somewhat, or at least forced it into the background. Tage's naturally happy disposition again asserted itself, and after some weeks' stay in Carlscrona, in company with gay and cheerful comrades, he soon became almost himself again. It was difficult to detect any trace of sorrow in his face; still it was there connected with the memory of Skuldfrið. The love for her was as a mark of fire in his soul, which neither time nor condition could take away, although he might perhaps have appeared to a superficial observer to have forgotten it.

Tage possessed certain qualities that ought to distinguish seamen, while he

lacked several. He had that elasticity of soul which renders the sons of the sea unwilling to fraternize with a real grief, but makes them shake it off or thrust it aside. They desire nothing between them and the life of activity which belongs to their vocation. Lively and frank, Tage was a seaman in heart and soul, but his mind lacked that practical ability which is absolutely necessary. Add to this that he was extremely obstinate, and could only with effort endure the rein which discipline imposes; nor was he adapted to a career in the navy. He had however chosen it from free will, because he fancied that true liberty ought to be found upon the sea. It would require years and much effort before Tage could become reconciled to the thought that all liberty without bounds is an enormity, for which no wise or reasonable person ought to strive.

Aberney had with joy seen Tage depart for Carlscrona, because he foresaw that he would there be thrown into a circle of activity, which would leave him no time to worry.

After he had gone Aberney wrote to Lothard, and awaited the answer with some impatience. Several weeks passed, before he received the following note:—

"HERR PROFESSOR: I have received your letter, and truly do not know what you allude to. Consequently I cannot reply to it; but within two or at the most three weeks I shall in person present myself to you in Stockholm, in order to give and demand an explanation.

"LOTHARD CANITZ."

Three or four weeks elapsed without Aberney's hearing anything further from Lothard. The Professor began to consider the whole note as a feint to gain time, and finally took the resolution to try to gain some information with regard to Skuldfrið's fate through the Russian

ambassador, when one day Aunt Sara came rushing into his room, pale as death, and stammering in an unsteady voice, —

“Victor, Baron Canitz is out there in the saloon and wishes to see you.”

The Professor rose, saying, —

“Indeed, I am glad that he at least had the courage to present himself here.”

“And you intend to receive a Canitz under your roof!” exclaimed Sara, striking her hands together. “You, an Aberney, allow him to remain a minute within your doors!”

“Aunt,” said Aberney, seriously, “young Canitz and I must meet. He who enters my door, be he friend or enemy, will I always greet as a guest. That is an old and customary civility in the North.” The Professor bade Aunt Sara to have the Baron shown in.

In a few moments these two men again stood face to face, both with heads carried high, and looking proudly at each other, while they exchanged a cold salutation.

The only time they had met before was in Abo, when Lothard, after an interview with the Governor, had so arranged it that Aberney was only ordered to leave Finland. When Lothard, on this occasion, called on Aberney, and obtained the letter he sent to Skuldfrid, some bitter words had been uttered by the Professor, and both were then so wrought up, that they had scarcely retained any impression of each other's outer appearance. Now, on the contrary, they were cool and composed. They looked at each other for several seconds, as if they wanted to find out how much honesty and truth their features exhibited. Lothard, younger and less accustomed to read in the human eye what it concealed of good or evil, maintained silence longer, and Aberney thus became the one to break it.

“You have let me wait a long time, Herr Baron,” said Aberney; and one who

knew the Professor could easily have perceived, from the accent of his clear and resonant voice, that the impression Lothard made on him must have been agreeable. He believed that he had read in the young man's handsome face a character quite different from the one he had expected to find.

“I know that, Herr Professor, but the delay was caused by certain formalities which I was obliged to undergo before I could throw off the Russian yoke, and as a free man place my foot upon Swedish soil. Now I am here to give you all the explanation you can require of me, and which I can furnish, after which I shall demand the same for the charge you have made against me?”

“Baron Canitz, I desire to know what fate has befallen Skuldfrid?” This time Aberney's voice was pretty sharp.

“But how can you turn to me with this question? Have you actually for a moment entertained the thought that *she*, the pure, uncorrupted girl, could like a criminal adventuress go with me from her home and leave her friends in ignorance of her fate?”

“Why these grand words? She has fled in a mysterious manner, and only an unfortunate attachment to you could have tempted her to do it,” said Aberney, calmly but decidedly.

A painful and bitter smile curled Lothard's lips when he replied, —

“You said an unfortunate attachment to me; if you had said a deep aversion, you would have come nearer to the truth. And to prove this to you, I will show you the letter she sent me after her departure.”

Lothard handed him Skuldfrid's letter. When Aberney read it he grew pale.

“Then you know Skuldfrid's mother,” said he in a muffled voice.

“The day before you left Abo, I discovered for the first time that Fru Smidt and Harmen Aberney were one and the same person.”

"How did you know her sad story?"

"Herr Professor, I cannot tell you. Let it suffice that I am familiar with it; but what I did not know was, that you were brother to Skuldfrid's father. Had I known that, believe me, much would then have been different."

Lothard now related quite simply all that had passed between him and Skuldfrid after Aberney's departure, his words uttered in anger about Skuldfrid's mother, and what had afterwards followed.

Aberney sat thoughtful and listened, as if trying to draw some conclusion from this account that could explain Skuldfrid's flight. When Lothard finished, he said more to himself than in the form of a question, —

"But why this secret departure, this disappearance?"

"The mother's crime is the only explanation," said Lothard, gloomily. "The consciousness that any stranger knew it, drove the proud girl far away from those who were in possession of the secret. How deeply must she not detest the one who dared to utter what she believed to be unknown to all?"

"And which was a secret to herself," said Aberney, sadly.

"What do you say?" exclaimed Lothard; "did not Skuldfrid know her mother's tragic life?"

"No, she was in complete ignorance of it, as well as of her mother's right name and relationship to me."

"O my God, what a dastardly act, have I then committed!" murmured Lothard. He rose and extended his hand to Aberney, saying: "If you can, Herr Professor, then forgive me the suffering I have occasioned you through her. Forgive me also the hatred and the ill-will I have nourished towards you. What fearful suffering have I not caused!"

Aberney took the offered hand without saying anything in reply, but he pressed it in a manner that said more than words. Lothard then took his leave, without a

syllable further being exchanged between them; but both separated with a mutual feeling of interest.

Three years had elapsed since the above-described conversation between Lothard and Aberney. Spring had again covered the earth with verdure, and the clear blue sky spread its arch over land and sea.

Vessels that had laid up during the winter were now preparing for sea. The seaman's heart swelled with hope and satisfaction. He should again plough the waves, again wrestle with the storm or speed towards new coasts. The rest on land had seemed long, the air suffocating, and an indescribable longing filled his breast.

What is the sailor's true fatherland? *The sea.* As we, when separated from our native land, turn our homesick eyes towards the horizon, and stretch our arms towards the Rubicon of our hopes, so does the sailor also when he has been a long time on land. His heart becomes oppressed, his mind consumed, and he sighs for the broad ocean.

In the month of May 183—, a frigate which we will call the *Carolina* set sail from Carlscrona on a Mediterranean expedition. All on board the stately man-of-war were in the best of spirits. They had bid the land a glad farewell, and gave a jubilant greeting to the restless waves.

The sea! This boundless realm with destruction in its bosom and poetic beauty upon its surface, fearful in its rage, wonderful in its stillness. One is awe-struck when it roars, and filled with melancholy when it lies slumbering and dreaming. The silence of its tranquillity paralyzes, the fury of its storms fevers the blood.

Life on the sea is so monotonous, we hear many utter. Only the superficial

observer can so express himself, not the thoughtful one. For the latter the ocean possesses a rich source of reflection. He may see its billows frothing with foam, or dashing wildly onward, yet it continually offers new pictures to admire, and fresh subjects for contemplation, for fancy, and for research.

The frigate *Carolina* had left Cadiz for Gibraltar the day previous to that on which we visit her.

The little floating community which is comprised in the term "man-of-war" is an exceedingly peculiar sight and one well worthy of attention. It offers many opportunities to admire the power of the human spirit to regulate all things, from the least to the greatest.

To one who is unacquainted with the management of a vessel and the precision with which everything on board is adapted to its proper time and place, it must be an enigma how so much can be accomplished, how so much can be performed within a given time, and how space can be found for it all. With one who does not know the activity and order upon a war vessel the question must unavoidably arise, What can the officers and three or four hundred men find to do during a long voyage? How do they pass the long days? Let us begin by casting a glance upon the deck of the vessel, as daybreak pierces the mists that hover over the blue depths. The ship rocks upon the waves lightly and carelessly. Perhaps we may find some persons known to us on board.

It is during the morning watch. All is so still, so mystic in the half-light, which is yet more obscure through the spread sails. At the stern stand two or three men at drill, still as mummies, with one eye on the compass and the other on the sails, repeating the second's "All right," "Steady," etc. At the post of command stands the officer on duty; now peering into the distance, and again casting searching glances at the weather.

His thought guides this whole moving machine, he is the one who commands for the time, and holds the life and welfare of all in his hand, and upon whose vigilance and judgment all on board must rely when the god of slumber visits them.

Before we continue our description we will in the dim light examine this man. His features seem familiar. We surely have seen the tall and slender figure of the young First Lieutenant once before. In this countenance, with its stern, serious, but yet rapt and ideal expression, we have no difficulty in recognizing Lothard Constantin Canitz. His glance, that looks straight forward, has something melancholy, which not even the strained attention can dissipate. That the thoughts or reveries which the silence has evoked do not draw him from his duty is evident from the scrutinizing glance which he ever and anon casts around him, and which shows that he realizes completely the responsibility of his post.

At this present period the life at sea was *all* to Lothard. There were no tender ties that bound him to the land, no delightful hopes or intense longing which linked his thoughts to any given spot on earth. No, he stood alone, regretted by none and expected by no anxiously beating heart. Forward or back, whichever way he looked, he stood alone; alone with a tortured feeling and memories that were burnt into his soul, which made all else but life at sea indifferent to him. There, with heaven's infinite arch above and the abyss of ocean beneath, he was at home, and lived in thoughts of the painful past. But we will leave him, and continue our walk on deck.

In the waist are a portion of the watch that were called out at four o'clock, and are not yet fully awake; some are leaning against the launch, and some are sitting on the gun-carriages, while oth-

ers walk slowly to and fro on the fore-castle.

Forward on a cannon the officer of the fore-castle stands leaning against the rail, with a night-glass in his hand. He is the Second Lieutenant, a young man with a strong, lithe frame and a fine Northern appearance. These clear blue eyes have we also seen before, for they belong to Tage Aberney. His features, generally so untroubled, are on this occasion almost disfigured by an expression of bitterness. The post he occupies, the responsibility imposed upon him, all seem to be forgotten for the unpleasant thoughts that occupy his mind. He stands motionless, and so absorbed in meditation that one would be tempted to believe he has forgotten where he is. Neither the raging sea nor the striking of the bell, which with its metal tongue announces the passage of time, nor the lookout's "All's well," which is repeated in all tones to the very mast-head, seems to reach his ear. He remains perfectly indifferent to everything, even to the dawning light in the east.

Lothard now cast a searching look forward, and then placing the speaking-trumpet to his mouth he cried in his clear voice, "Fore-castle, there!"

This call from the stern concerned the one who had command at the fore-castle.

Tage started and turned round quickly. "Halloa!" cried he, in answer to the unexpected call.

Poor Tage! he had so abandoned himself to his mournful reveries, that he had become unmindful of the outer world. Solitude, the mother of all elevated and base, good and terrible thoughts, had called up vanished memories and earlier illusions which had long since been buried in the cold grave of reality. All that he had believed himself to possess and had now lost came before his soul, and who or what was it that called him back from this review of the past to the present?

It was the voice of the man whom he considered to have plundered him of his richest hopes. He leaned over the rail, while in inward anger he clenched his fists convulsively and muttered, —

"The mere presence of that man makes my blood boil!"

Lothard's voice again sounded, —

"The jib lifts. The jib is not hoisted enough."

Tage jumped from the cannon to wind-ward, where he stood during his watch, went over to leeward, and saw that the condition was actually as Lothard's words indicated. Tage commanded, —

"A pull on the jib halyard!"

The order was immediately executed by the fore-castle men, after which Tage went back to his place.

This neglect of Tage, in not noticing what Lothard had called his attention to, made the latter leave the poop and go forward. Without saying a word to Tage, he went by him, cast a look at the sails, and then turned to him, asking, —

"Why are not the fore bow-lines hauled out?"

"I dare not haul them out any more," answered Tage, touching his cap. "They are as taut as they will bear."

Lothard looked at him with eyes that boded anything but good. He now had it in his power to profit by a right which is seldom used by an officer on duty, namely, that of humiliating a subordinate by meddling, so to speak, in that which belongs to his department. Lothard, we must, alas! confess it, eagerly embraced this opportunity to humble Tage.

"She is not braced up enough," said he, and without waiting for a reply, he cried, "Haul on the lee fore braces!"

The men flew to the braces, the boat-swain's pipe sounded slowly a signal to haul, and one wing of the giant bird turned; the bolts and rigging creaked, and the back stays swayed.

Lothard had in the mean time remained

forward. When *he* thought the ship was taut enough, he commanded, "Belay!"

Then he turned to Tage with an ironical smile, saying, "Now, if you please, haul out the fore bow-lines better than you did awhile ago." He now went aft.

There is nothing that wounds an officer so deeply, although he may be the youngest second lieutenant in the navy and on his first voyage, as when the officer on duty comes forward to manage and direct that which is his own especial province. The ground of this is perhaps a false ambition, a childish conviction which exists with most subordinates, that they are above all correction; an idea that with the epaulettes a perfect capacity follows for everything.

Tage considered that his dignity was offended in an insulting manner, and this, added to the acrimony he felt before, increased his antipathy to Lothard to the highest degree. He now however stifled the resentment that boiled within his breast; but he swore that Lothard should one day repay him richly for all the humiliations he had suffered at his hands. The rage that filled him was now held back by the power of discipline, and habit of obeying when one is on board ship; but once freed from these restraints, Tage would be formidable. He did not understand the doctrine of forgetting and forgiving. He only comprehended that he must have his revenge, cost what it would.

He looked gloomily at the long dark waves that rolled against the prow of the frigate. Over the whole watery desert which surrounded the vessel a half-light yet rested, which was in perfect harmony with the sombre, turbulent, and angry feelings that raged within his breast.

The sea sang its monotonous and mighty song to the two young men, who on both sides entertained the most unkind feelings towards each other. They did not listen to the simple and majestic strain, they only heard the dark spirits within them. They had now no mind for that sea which

Byron calls "Creation's eldest child," but were only absorbed in the consideration of all the ill they had suffered through each other. Under the influence of these feelings they stood silent and motionless as statues; with the one difference that Lothard did not for an instant neglect the duties assigned to him, while Tage forgot everything in his discomfiture. An hour thus elapsed. Tage had now and then turned his head to throw a long and burning glance at the man who now ruled him by the power of office and rank.

The mists of night yet lingered over the water. They were waiting the moment when the king of day should free himself from the embrace of night. Their light veil began to fade before the first tender rays which the sun sent forth to greet the day, before he raised his glowing face above the waves to strew the shining surface of the sea with gold. There was something magically fascinating and grandly beautiful in the moment when the sun entered upon his course through the blue firmament.

Lothard put his hand to his cap with a melancholy smile at the sight of the brilliant morning sun, as if to send it his greeting. His comrade forward, on the contrary, did not bestow a glance upon the glorious presence.

The sun's rising upon sea and land is the signal for life and activity. So also on board the *Carolina*.

The magic power of night was broken by the approach of light.

At the rising of the sun the wind changed two points in their favor. Lothard's quick attention remarked this immediately. He ordered, —

"Haul on the weather braces; let go the bow-lines; haul away!"

There can scarcely be anything more rejoicing for those who have cruised a long time against a contrary wind, than when they hear the welcome words, "Let go the bow-lines, haul on the weather braces." The sound calls all to their feet,

and the watch compete to reach the ropes first. It was lively as a dance. The aft sails were braced according to the wind. Now came the turn of the fore sails.

"Haul on the weather fore braces!" commanded Lothard.

The fore braces were not hauled; and not a word was reported. The head sails were already lifted, when Lothard jumped down from his place and sprang forward to Tage, asking him with heat, —

"What has come over you, Lieutenant; why are not the fore yards properly braced?"

Tage, who felt the previous reprimand burning like a coal within him, answered, —

"I have not received any order to do it."

Lothard looked at him with a cold and almost contemptuous expression, advanced a step nearer to him, and said in a lowered voice, —

"Herr Lieutenant, he fills his position poorly who only does what he is ordered."

After Lothard said this he returned aft. The fore yards were trimmed with the after ones, and during the remainder of this watch no further words were exchanged between them.

Tage had flung a threatening look after his comrade and muttered, —

"What infernal fate has thrown us upon the same plank and doomed me to live with that wretch? These watches, which he and I must have together, these satanic pin-thrusts that he always gives me at the least opportunity, all are calculated to rouse my aversion. It is certain that before we separate I shall be as bad a man as he, so demoralized do I become through my hatred to him."

While Tage was holding this soliloquy, the boatswain, holding the signal-pipe to his mouth, stood waiting at the main hatches with his eyes fastened upon Lothard, who in the capacity of officer on duty cried out when the last stroke announced five bells, —

"Turn out, all hands!"

All personal interests were now obliged to give place to the activity and commotion that ensued. Each and all of the officers had now as much as they could attend to.

From the spar deck to the berth deck, even to the most remote corner, the quietest hammock, sounded like an echo, "All hands, all hands!" and it may truly be said that it is the most disturbing sound for a slumbering sailor. The activity of the day is then virtually begun.

In vain do we attempt to form an idea of the perfect neatness and order that prevail on board a man-of-war. It is not alone the want of space that calls for this, but it is the essential condition of comfort and well-being. Therefore the first thing that is done, after the men have been called out and taken mess, is a general cleaning up of the vessel.

What would you, my amiable and incomparable housekeepers say, of a housecleaning that could be done in an hour? It must inevitably be very incomplete, or, rather, it cannot deserve the name. Why, it requires as much time as that to sweep two or three floors. You shrug your shoulders and regard it as a fiction. Yet it is nothing of the kind, but a fact, that in one hour's time such a thorough cleaning takes place, that there is not a spot that has been neglected.

Tage and Lothard had also other things to think about than their mutual hostility, for one had to see that the men aft of the main mast attended properly to their duties, while the other had his post forward.

The deck at such a moment presented a singular picture. The crew, with pants and shirt-sleeves rolled up, came with buckets of water, which was poured in rushing streams over the decks. Some strewed sand over the wet decks, and another set got down on their knees and scoured the planks with soft Malta stone; after these came yet others who

went over it with mops; then clean water washed away the sand; and the deck was finally swabbed by another detachment in turn.

Thus is the cleaning performed quickly and briskly. I defy any housekeeper to exhibit a cleaner and whiter floor than the second can show his chief after a few days' process of this kind. Each one has with this, as with all the operations on board, his definite duty, and this explains the rapidity with which in less than an hour the whole vessel, boats, gun-carriages, everything loose and fast, is neat and trim.

By eight o'clock the vessel's toilet is made, and all is in order on board, except the polishing of the brass ornaments which are found here and there.

Lothard's and Tage's watch was now ended. When they met in passing through the gun-room, Lothard said to Tage as he went by him, —

"In the way that you, Lieutenant, attend to your watch, I shall be obliged to perform the whole duty, and that is something I do not feel disposed to do in the future."

"Present to the Commander what you have to remark," said Tage defiantly, and passed on.

Lothard looked after him. Tage went into his cabin. One of Lothard's older comrades, First Lieutenant Steen, the only one on board with whom he stood on anything like an intimate footing, approached him, saying, as he slapped Lothard familiarly on the shoulder, —

"Tell me frankly, Canitz, why are you so ill-disposed toward Aberney? You have continually some remark to make."

"Never except with regard to the service," answered Lothard, coldly.

"That is true; but you are not as particular with your other shipmates; towards them you are more lenient. I greatly fear that you and Aberney have gone to sea with an inward cargo of ill-

will for each other, which it would be wisest to throw overboard."

"Do you mean to say that I ought to be blind to Aberney's neglect while on duty?"

"I mean to say that there should be no enemies on board of a vessel, but only comrades. The winds of the sea blow away all disagreements." Steen left Lothard, who went upon the gun-deck, while he thought with a peculiar bitterness, —

"Blow away all disagreements; yes, disagreements, that is true; but neither sea nor land can heal the wounds of the soul or allay the animosity that the sight of a hated rival engenders. The mere thought of that ring he wears rouses my enmity against him. It is a souvenir from her. Her name is engraved upon it. Ah, were I to travel around the globe or to pass my whole life separated from everything that reminded me of her, I could still never be able to forget that this Tage was so unspeakably dear to her. And I—I should be a good comrade towards him! I should not be human if I could do that."

At ten o'clock the exercises began and continued till a quarter past eleven. The power of both mind and body are then so in demand, that every one who takes part in them must throw away all sickly dreams, all brooding upon sorrow and misery.

One can say of the seaman's life, that it is an incessant struggle, a chain of endless activities and unremitting strife with unforeseen difficulties and exertions. A plank a few inches in thickness, which a hidden rock can split, saves the seaman from death. From the moment he places his foot on board the vessel, new dangers yawn for him every moment. It requires *men* to devote their lives to a career so full of peril, — men who know how to die.

When we see a proud and beautiful man-of-war at anchor, when we have the

pleasure of beholding from the land how its crew "man the yards," etc., it does not occur to us to make any further reflections upon this department of the country's defence. We see in the crew soldiers at sea, and in the officers *men who wear the uniform of the navy*. For the rest we devote no further thought to them than to any of the land army, and yet let us regard these men a little closer, who in all lands where there is a fleet constitute the pride of the nation.

What then is a sailor? A being thrown out into the world to labor and forsake, who never knows what it is to enjoy undisturbed rest or a regular manner of life. He has a language and habits of his own, and a peculiar way of acting; all in consequence of his vocation. This is a picture of his existence:—

Weary from toil, he throws himself into his hammock; but scarcely has he closed his eyes, before a thundering voice, like the trumpet of doom, calls him upon deck to battle with a furious sea, a tumultuous element which shows him every second an almost certain death. He is not allowed to think of himself, of the danger or the horrible roaring of the storm; he must have but one thought, and that is to catch the word of command so as to obey instantly. *The vessel* is his world, its preservation his duty, and he must remain unconcerned if in these efforts he should lose his life. Not yet dry from a rain, which when it has a storm in tow, again drives him up into the rigging, he is still deluged by the floods of sea and heaven. Scarcely has he sought his solitary couch, wearied and exhausted from all these labors, before the bell announces that *the hour of rest is past*, and that his place is up there in the cold, whistling blast.

Thus for men who choose this vocation a much greater strength of soul and body is required than for any other career, and no comparison can be made

between the sailor and the soldier; for the former stands far above the latter. He must endure more hardships and needs more courage and intrepidity than the soldier on land. If this is the case in general, how much more then in time of war. In the battle, when the balls of the enemy whistle around him, he has not only to think of the destruction these may occasion, but he must also have his attention directed to the wave, the dear yet treacherous wave. While the soldier on land can at least trust the soil on which he stands and fights, the seaman expects every moment to see the bark upon which he is struggling fall to pieces. Wherever he turns death stares him in the face, not only from the enemy's batteries, but from the depths of the sea and in the pitiless rage of the storm.

With all this we find nowhere so much briskness, cheerfulness, and vivacity as with the seaman. He likes these vicissitudes, he is fond of danger, he has a mind and an eye for the beautiful and sublime, and his character resembles the element to which he devotes his life; quietly dreaming, when calm surrounds him; cheerful, when a fresh wind fills the sails; watchful and energetic, when the storm rages; light and frivolous when he places his foot on *terra firma*. He has nothing which belongs to him, either of joy or sorrow; all takes the stamp of the capricious sea. Ah, I never see an old seaman without wishing to take him by the hand; for vividly before my soul stands all that he has suffered and endured, and I realize how much courage it requires to labor thus for others.

But these reflections have perhaps kept us too long from the scene of my story.

The morning's drill is ended. After the cleaning is over, the men have their dinner. The officers, with the exception of those on duty, gather in the gun-room, where they talk over the events of the day, that is to say, they criticise the

manœuvres that have been made. One ought to have been done so, and another in a different way.

Lothard generally said little, and seldom entered into any conversation, save that which related to sea life, the vessel's manœuvres, etc. Whenever he expressed himself on these subjects, he evinced such a thorough knowledge and comprehension, such a clear judgment and lively interest, that one and all listened with attention to what he said. On these occasions he displayed superior ability, while he spoke at such times with a simplicity not usually found in his proud demeanor.

On the above-mentioned day they had achieved a very fine manœuvre. Once in the gun-room, they all, with the exception of Tage, collected round Lothard to hear his opinion. The stern, cold face became unusually animated, his eyes sparkled, and he expressed himself with so much warmth and interest that every one listened to him with pleasure.

Tage had thrown himself down at the other end of the room. The discussion was particularly animated. Pale and with a clouded brow Tage looked over at his hated rival, whom he considered, in spite of all that should have proven the contrary, to have been the cause of Skuldfrid's disappearance. The interest which his companions manifested for Lothard irritated Tage as much as the eloquence and proficiency with which he presented his views. He felt angry when he thought that this Canitz stood above him in rank, in knowledge, in the correct discharge of his duties, yes, in everything; and the result of it all was that Lothard was regarded as a model by the superior officers.

While Tage was doing all in his power to embitter his mind against his older comrade, the conversation continued. They had passed from the consideration of the manœuvre in question to reflections upon the seaman's career.

"Before we express ourselves further on this subject," said Lieutenant Steen, "let us first make clear what a seaman is."

"A man whose calling is to live on the sea," responded one of the officers; "unless, like us, he has to live the greater part of the time on land," added he, laughing.

"The Lieutenant's answer is very correct," rejoined Lothard, with a subtle smile; "but the question will bear a little closer consideration, and as we have the various denominations of officer, sailor, mariner, we must unavoidably seek certain distinctions between them which are well defined. Let us, in the first place, speak of a good sailor, to begin with this prominent class among us sons of the sea, who are to be regarded as the most practical of all the men who consecrate their lives to the service and *glory* of a country. Skilful in all that is required of him, quick, active, vigilant, bold, and hardy, he is as if formed to brave every danger, to endure the hardships of every climate, all the discomforts of labor and want of rest, and to submit to all possible privations. He is a perfectly disciplined soldier, not only because accustomed to subordination, but because impressed with a conviction of the necessity of instant obedience; and yet, while he does what is commanded without a moment's hesitation, he perceives immediately the right or the wrong, the strength or weakness, of the order he executes. He realizes directly the difference between an officer able to direct him, and one who merely bears the title, between the genuine naval officer and one who has only a theoretical knowledge, without possessing the practical judgment that he has himself. Therefore it is more necessary in the navy than anywhere else, that the command corresponds in all respects to the claims that can be made upon it, or it otherwise becomes the object of contempt with the crew it

is to govern, and whose life depends entirely upon its supremacy."

"That is all perfectly true," returned Lieutenant Steen; "but the sailor is only to be regarded as a machine after all, a tool or a means for the accomplishment of the thought which issues from the commander. He cannot possibly fill any higher role."

"Perhaps that is so; but impossible as it is for the soul to manifest any of its ideas without the assistance of the body, is it for a naval officer to become anything without a good crew?"

"Yet the soul is of higher value than the body."

"True, but it can accomplish nothing of any avail, without the body's assistance."

"Think of what is required to become a skilful commander of a vessel."

"Yes, a skilful naval officer must possess, besides a thorough nautical education, a large experience; the most practical acquaintance with all the details, a discerning eye, and a complete knowledge of and ability to employ all the collected forces which set the ship in motion. He ought through this experience to be able to meet the most unforeseen danger with calmness and to thwart it instantly. He sees directly what is to be done, and if his orders are executed by sailors such as I have just described, then the means of conquering every species of difficulty are inexhaustible."

"But a skilful commander seldom has such a choice crew, and yet he must go victorious through all the obstacles which he encounters, or else he is not qualified for his post," observed one of the officers.

"Only the ignorant can make such demands; but these large claims arise from the fact that it depends in a great measure upon the commander to make his crew what it should be, in order to fulfil the requirements that may be made upon it. His eye tells him, from the

first day he is on board, what is lacking. As soon as he perceives this, he must be indefatigable in repairing the defects, and through daily practice and the greatest strictness and exactness in every exercise or manœuvre, down to the minutest details, train his men to the required standard. If these efforts are seconded by his officers, he will succeed unavoidably in making his crew perfectly capable and reliable. If any mortal has the right to feel proud, in the true sense of the word, over the power of his will, and what he has gained through it, then it is the commander of a ship of the officers and crew that he has drilled. It is his zeal and interest that made them what they are, and if any one ought to be loved it is he. If he is a truly superior man, then he also knows that what he is he has become only through his crew, and what the latter is it has become through him. Although distinct in their individual elements, they are inseparable in the great whole which is called a *man-of-war*. Every officer on board ought to consider it a sacred duty to assist his commander with all his power, by fulfilling his duties with interest and exactness. I consider the least oversight of an officer ten times more culpable than the greatest of a sailor, because such an example must exert an injurious influence upon the crew."

Lothard's look had with the utterance of these last words been irresistibly directed toward Tage. Their eyes met, and Tage, who was in an inward ferment, only needed this opportunity to give vent to his indignation. He rose at Lothard's last words, saying, —

"You probably consider yourself just such a model of the naval officer, who seconds his Commander's efforts in forming a worthy crew." Tage, in saying this, had stepped forward to the group around Lothard. The latter looked at him coldly, and answered in an unchanged voice, —

"I at least endeavor to fill my place as well as I am able, and according to my opinion no man ought to put his foot on a man-of-war who does not intend to embrace his career with heart and soul. He who does not love his duties will always remain a poor seaman. I do not understand how a man dares to be guilty of neglect, or of anything that evinces a lack of interest. I should most assuredly send a bullet through my head, if my Commander found occasion to make any remarks against me. When I take the watch in the evening, I wish him to go to his berth, with the full assurance that he leaves upon deck a sharp, vigilant eye and a faithful heart, that places its duty above all else on land or sea. This, Lieutenant Aberney, is my understanding of my duties; but it by no means presupposes that it is yours."

Lothard left the group, intending to go up on the gun-deck. Tage checked him with the words, —

"Is it your intention to insult me, and throw out the assertion that I do not understand my duties?"

"Herr Lieutenant, I have not spoken of you, but only of my opinion in regard to what a naval officer ought to be." Lothard looked at him proudly, and went up the steps.

"How ticklish you are, my dear Aberney," said Steen, when Lothard was out of hearing. "You complain of Canitz, yet he has this advantage over you, that he never accosts you, except when, in the performance of your duties, you are guilty of something that deserves remark."

"Possibly," replied Tage; "but he never opens his mouth, without there being something overbearing in word and tone."

"Aberney is right," joined in a couple of younger officers, who also felt ill-disposed towards Lothard on account of his superiority. "Canitz is proud and arrogant."

"He is a well-informed and distinguished officer," affirmed the second.

In a few moments after this Aberney and the younger officers were talking about other matters. They spoke of the pleasures of the capital, of the ladies, theatres, music, and of everything except that which concerned the frigate.

"Did you see Mademoiselle Högqvist in the 'Quaker and the Danseuse' during your last visit in Stockholm?" asked a young officer from Carlscrona, turning to Tage.

"Certainly I did," was the answer. A long discussion now followed about the beauty, grace, and charms of the lovely actress.

While Canitz and the other officers had been conversing, those on deck were engaged in taking the regular noon observation.

After the Commander and officers had taken their dinner at two o'clock, we find a part of them promenading to and fro on the gun-deck, refreshing themselves with the cool breeze that plays through the open port-holes. At one of these sat Lothard, looking at the boundless ocean whose green waves were crested with a glittering white foam which, like an embroidery of lace, was thrown over the restless and heaving waters. What he felt we do not know, but what he thought we may possibly be able to describe. You perhaps believe, my young reader, that his thoughts were with his 'heart's beloved.' No, they were chained to the waves. At this moment these were all to him. He made silent reflections upon the poetic side of a seaman's life; upon the struggle between nature and human genius which it offers. He considered its many changes, and how, during the lonely night watch, he had seemed to come nearer that eternal and infinite being we call God; realizing the inexhaustible opportunities of admiring the grandeur of the Creator in the feasts to which the sea invites, as well in its gladness as in its

anger. Lothard would have liked to plough the deep year out and year in, only dropping anchor in any port when necessity demanded; and then out again into the roaring storm or the dreamy tranquillity of the calm. He would willingly have united himself to the sea, and sworn to live and die upon it, without feeling a regret for the land. Poor Lothard, the wave you now love so dearly shall perhaps one day become the enemy of your dearest wishes, and carry you far from the object to which they cling!

At four o'clock the exercises again began, and then Lothard, like all the others, continued in full activity until six o'clock, when, after taking their position at the cannon, the men went through their drill; then the night reefs were taken in the top-sails, and all exercises for the day were over.

At eight o'clock the night watch commenced. Lothard and Tage now had the "first watch." The officer on duty, which was Lothard, "piped the watch below," and the night began.

But when does the day end or the night begin upon a man-of-war? It is hard to say. The first watch is called the night watch; but who can sleep at eight o'clock? Now when all work for the day is ended, when the men can take rest and manifest their sailor dispositions in their own peculiar way, they feel no desire to take to their hammocks. Then is the time for recreation, according to one's fancy.

These men, who perhaps since four o'clock in the morning have not had a really leisure moment with the exception of the dinner hour, and of whom half are to take the watch at midnight, cannot be persuaded to go to rest. They gather in groups here and there. The older sailors, sunburnt tars with the true seaman's bearing, saunter back and forth on the lee side of the ship, talking of home, of old adventures in far-off lands, of miraculous escapes from death, trying

to outdo each other in these yarns so peculiar to them, which, when related in their dry, caustic manner, causes the accidental listener to burst into a hearty laugh.

The under officers promenade on the weather side, conversing with each other in a more cultivated tone.

On the fore-castle, around a boon companion loaded with tales and stories, gather a part of the crew, generally the fore-castle men, listening with intense interest to those marvellous ghost stories in which everything is bewitched. Others, more musical, are humming some old tune whose words and melody gradually become plainer and plainer, as the officer of the fore-castle does not seem to pay any attention to it.

Here the captain of the fore-castle has got hold of some of the less gifted of Sweden's seafaring peasantry, and is making a round with them, showing them in a practical manner the utility of every rope they see. Over there in a corner a poor simpleton of a fellow has become the sport of the "ordinary seamen," and, to judge from his looks, he wishes that God in his great wisdom, had never divided the sea from the land.

Under officers walk back and forth on the lee quarter-deck, while the Commander and First Lieutenant move about on the ship's place of honor, the weather quarter-deck, where Lothard as the officer on duty, with trumpet in hand, now keeps guard over all.

It being after two bells (nine o'clock), all must now be quiet in the ship. Lothard received his orders for the night from the Commander, who, wishing the other officers a good night, retired to his cabin.

We will not recount the various occurrences which afforded Lothard an opportunity to humiliate Tage, nor the

latter's efforts to call attention to Lothard's haughty, and, as he called it, overbearing manner. The result was that Tage's state of mind became more and more hostile each day; his condition reacted upon his younger comrades, who in their sympathy took up everything that wounded Tage, and thus nourished a deep antipathy to Lothard.

While the tension of feeling continually increased between Lothard and Tage, the frigate approached Gibraltar. It was a beautiful morning. Lothard had the watch. A fresh breeze filled the sails, and the heavens spread their blue canopy over the beautiful scene beneath. Directly ahead appeared the straits; on one side Mont-aux-Singes, an African giant, black as the creatures that move at its feet; and on the other Gibraltar's barren rock, whose open sides conceal hundreds of cannon ready to hurl death to every point of the horizon. It was as if the angry billows of the Mediterranean had separated these two pillars of granite and lava.

The breeze grew stronger; the frigate pressed forward under full sail and cast anchor at the foot of the famous mountain.

Tage longed to get on land and to give vent in some manner to the indignation which he had been obliged to keep so long within himself. All the petty stings, the many annoyances, that Lothard had occasioned him during the voyage had so increased his exasperation, that he felt from the depths of his soul that one or the other of them was too many for this life. It actually required the respect for discipline to restrain an outbreak; and Tage had been obliged to summon all his power of resistance, not to crush the object of his anger. He felt that he could with difficulty restrain his irritated feelings for the remainder of the voyage, but had firmly decided to give some expression to them during their stay in Gibraltar. How or in what manner, he

did not know. He only saw that it was impossible for Lothard and him to continue the voyage together; one of them must remain in Gibraltar, to be buried in its soil.

Most of the officers requested and obtained permission to go ashore. Only those who had watch duty to perform remained on board, and besides these Lothard. Leaning against the gunwale he looked at his comrades' departure. His expression was perfectly indifferent.

"Was Lieutenant Aberney on board the cutter?" asked a voice behind Lothard, in French.

He started and turned round. It was Dr. Wagner, who had accompanied the vessel from Cadiz. He had come on board in the capacity of surgeon, as the doctor from Carlserona had been taken ill at Cadiz and was unable to continue the voyage.

"Yes, he was," replied Lothard, coldly.

"Do you not intend to go ashore?"

"No. It is the third time that I visit Gibraltar; and I really do not see why I should go on land, unless in behalf of the service."

"It may also be wisest for you to remain on board," resumed Wagner with a mysterious air. "Lieutenant Aberney cannot possibly be well disposed towards you. You have not exactly sweetened life for him."

"If that is the case, the fault should be his own. Why does he attend to his duty so poorly as to give occasion to remark?"

"That may be, but the result has been that not only he, but his companions, are ill-disposed towards you. You did wisely to remain on board."

"What danger could I have run in going ashore?"

"You undoubtedly surmise it."

"Wagner, you cannot mean to assert that I fear danger?" said Lothard, and smiled contemptuously.

"Not I; but Aberney and his com-

rades will so interpret your conduct. Yet this may be to you a perfectly indifferent matter. I, for my part, consider that you do right in avoiding all encounters on land with Aberney and his friends."

A pause ensued, after which Wagner remarked, in the most indifferent tone in the world, —

"The 'roads' here offer a singular view, and one can say that they are a rendezvous for all nations. It is strange that the trade here can be so active, when the population on the whole is so small. I wonder if Sir G—— D—— is still Governor? They say he was a true gentleman."

The Doctor continued to talk in this way a good while, without Lothard's giving any heed to his words. Suddenly he interrupted the Doctor's harangue, saying, —

"Do you believe, in the event of my going ashore, that fool of an Aberney and his comrades would have the intention of laying hands on my person?"

"Yes, so it would appear from their talk last evening."

"So; but fear of the unpleasant consequences would very likely deter them."

"That is true; and for the prevention of such scandal you do right to remain here. It was my intention to ask you to do it. You can smile at what Aberney and his friends think of your remaining. You have thereby saved the inconsiderate young man from getting into trouble. That is to act nobly towards an enemy."

"Nobly!" Lothard smiled bitterly. "It is long since I was magnanimous. This time however I will be so." He left the Doctor and took his way to the Commander.

A half-hour afterwards he asked Wagner, —

"Do you feel like going ashore with me? To you, who have never been to Gibraltar before, it may be of interest to

see this celebrated place. Who knows but what you might have an opportunity to make some new psychological experiments?"

In a few minutes the yawl again rowed from the frigate. Lothard and Wagner were in it. When they reached the land, the former offered his hand to the Doctor, saying, —

"We will meet at eight o'clock, when I return to the frigate. You can now take one of the sailors with you as a guide." Lothard walked away with rapid steps.

Many pairs of beaming eyes followed the tall, handsome naval officer as he pursued his way, entirely indifferent to the attention that was bestowed upon him. None of the eyes bent upon him could flatter themselves with having met his. What were women to him? He detested them each and all, and especially because they reminded him that in the whole world there was only one whom he loved, and that one had changed him into a being without peace, who possessed nothing dear but the sea, and who dragged forth his life only to obliterate the evil his forefathers had done.

Lothard went directly to the Hotel —. The large rooms swarmed with people, and different groups had collected around the small tables to read the newspapers or converse.

Lothard threw a searching glance over the assemblage, but there was not one among them who wore the uniform of the Swedish Navy. He went through the large saloon and into one of the side-rooms, which was empty; there he threw himself down by a table on which were some newspapers. An hour elapsed, when he suddenly heard some voices which spoke Swedish. Lothard remained still, while he thought, —

"I will wait here until they have had time to get seated."

At the same moment three of the officers of the frigate came into the room

where Canitz sat. His back was turned to the door, and he did not make the smallest movement at their entrance.

"Ah, here we have a comrade!" exclaimed one of them.

"No, you are mistaken; it is not a comrade, it is — Baron Canitz," replied another, whom Lothard recognized as Aberney. At the sound of Tage's voice he turned round. When he saw Aberney and his associates, he greeted them with a cold bow, and resumed his place, without adding a word to his salute. He called a waiter who was passing and ordered a half-bottle of wine and cigars, after which he continued to read his newspaper quite composedly.

Tage became purple with indignation at Lothard's cold and haughty greeting. He and his companions seated themselves at a table near the one where Lothard sat. They began to joke quite freely. When the waiter came in with the wine and cigars that Lothard had ordered, Tage cried, —

"Bring those here."

The man stopped and looked at Tage, after which he said, —

"That gentleman over there ordered them."

"It is all the same, he can wait." So saying Tage took the tray from his hands.

Without looking up from his paper, Lothard said, —

"Bring me some other wine and cigars." The waiter hurried out.

In the mean time the three officers had emptied the little flask of wine, and when the waiter again came in, Lothard's wine was the second time appropriated by Tage; this time also Lothard said quite calmly, —

"Fetch me some more wine."

When the man came in for the third time, Tage got up from his seat and placed himself right opposite Lothard at the same table, saying in a mocking tone, —

"I presume, Herr Baron, that your intention is to empty that bottle of wine in company with me and our comrades?"

"One bottle more and three glasses," was the only answer Lothard gave, without raising his eyes from the paper.

"My comrades and I," resumed Tage, leaning his elbows on the table and looking at Canitz with a derisive expression, "consider it uncivil of you, *Herr Baron*, to continue reading, when we have given you to understand that we wish to drink with you. Therefore, away with the paper!" exclaimed Tage, and the next moment the newspaper lay at Lothard's feet.

A peal of laughter from the comrades followed this mandate. Lothard's pale forehead flushed burning red, but he continued motionless. With apparent composure he stretched out his hand, took a cigar which he lighted, and began to smoke quite phlegmatically.

"Have they so little breeding in the land from whence you come, that they do not answer when they are spoken to?" asked Tage.

Lothard continued to keep silent. One of the other officers said, with a laugh, —

"Why the devil, my dear Aberney, do you speak of breeding to a — Russian. You ought to know that they are barbarians."

"You are right, and one must have forbearance with such; I will also have it with our close-mouthed Baron. I can relate a little story while we drink our wine, which will most assuredly interest *Baron Canitz*."

Lothard smoked in silence. When the waiter brought the wine and glasses, he said, —

"Pick up the paper!" He pointed to the one Tage had snatched from his hand. The waiter handed it to him, but Lothard told him to lay it on the other table.

"Well, *Baron*, will you not fill our glasses?" resumed Tage.

"Fill the gentlemen's glasses," was Lothard's answer.

"You shall drink to our health," said Tage, meaningly.

Lothard let his glass stand untouched.

"Ah, I understand. You will first hear my story. Nothing is more reasonable," said Tage.

The other officers also seated themselves around the table, each one with the scarcely commendable, but too common feeling of malicious exultation at the thought that something very disagreeable was now coming to the object of their envy.

Lothard maintained his cold exterior; not a muscle in his face betrayed the slightest change of emotion. He smoked his cigar with an indifferent air.

"There was once," began Tage, whose whole appearance exhibited his inflamed state of feeling, "a Swedish nobleman who betrayed his country and entered the Russian service. This man's treason was liberally rewarded by the Russian government. He became a very rich man, and his sons, who followed faithfully their father's false example, were treated by the Czar with great favor. One of these had also a son born and educated in Russia. It was to be supposed that he would become a good subject; but no, he became a renegade in his turn, and instead of remaining as a man of honor in the service of the country where he was born, he left it just at the moment that Russia most needed her officers. He served first in the English, then in the Swedish Navy. We enjoy the honor of having this deserter for a comrade, an honor which every Swedish officer ought to regard as a shame. Yet, all this belongs to the man's public life. He has also a private history, and this has still darker stains; for the Russian backslider during his stay in Finland —"

At the word "Finland" Lothard's clenched fist fell on the table with a violent blow, and he fastened a look on Tage

which made him turn pale; but after a short pause he continued, —

"He ran away with a young and innocent girl, who was betrothed."

"The villain!" exclaimed the others.

"Your health, Baron Canitz!" Tage seized his glass and raised it. Lothard remained motionless, with his clenched hand still resting on the table, and his dark eyes riveted on Tage's countenance.

"Well," cried the latter, irritated beyond all bounds at Lothard's manifest indifference, "do you not hear that I drink to you?"

"I do not drink with fools," answered Lothard, and rose.

"You shall drink or" — Tage knocked the cigar from Lothard's mouth — "I will say that you are a dishonorable scamp, with whom no honest Swede can serve as a comrade."

Lothard slowly took a new cigar and lighted it, saying with emphasis, —

"We will see if you dare to repeat this to-morrow." He took some steps towards the door. Tage intended to rush after him, but his comrades checked him.

"Control yourself, and do not forget that you wear a uniform," said one of them.

Lothard had in the mean time left the room.

"Ah, the wretch," muttered Tage, almost choked with rage, "with what infernal indifference has he not allowed me to insult him; and this man who has suffered himself to be treated in such a manner, this man shall I serve under. There is not a drop of honest blood to be found in the fellow's veins."

All agreed that Lothard's behavior was destitute of any self-respect; but just for that reason those who were less excited thought Aberney was too good to compromise himself for his sake.

The result was that they considered Lothard only deserving of a good thrashing, but not at all of a pistol-shot or a sword-thrust. When this verdict was

rendered, Tage felt somewhat calmer, and they went out into the billiard-saloon, where Tage and two of his companions commenced to play. All the bystanders followed the game with attention, as Tage was distinguished for great skill. He was just about to make a fine stroke, when some one touched his shoulder. He turned round, provoked at the unwelcome intruder, and was not a little surprised when he found himself face to face with Lothard.

"You desired to fight with me?" said Lothard.

"Yes," answered Tage.

Lothard looked at his watch.

"It is now five o'clock; so in about an hour on Neutral-Ground, at the beginning of the cork forest on the road to St. Roque. You have the choice of weapons."

"Pistols."

"Have you any with you on land?"

"Yes!"

"Then take them with you; but you will allow me to make one condition to our duel."

"What is that?"

"That it shall occur in the presence of our three comrades. They have witnessed the insult, they ought also to witness the amends."

"I am willing."

"Good; then about an hour hence."

It was all over with the game of billiards. Tage and his comrades left the saloon.

However violently the blood may boil in our veins, or whatever the feelings may be that prompt a man to challenge one of his fellows, there is always some moment when reflection raises its voice in the midst of the tumult which drowns the reason. This moment occurs when the duellists proceed to the place of meeting.

When Lothard challenged Tage, the

latter felt his heart beat with joy. He should thus be delivered at once from this hated Canitz; for either he or Lothard should remain on the place. The hour of revenge was at hand. He should at last see the blood of his detested rival. It seemed to Tage that he could scarcely live until the time appointed, so impatient did he feel; but when he and his friends betook themselves to the place of meeting, there was something within him that like a warning repeated, —

"Either you will not return, or you will have the life of a human being upon your conscience, — that conscience, which up to this day has been innocent."

Arrived at the place of rendezvous, they found Lothard there before them. He was quite alone.

"Have you no second?" asked Tage, disagreeably surprised at finding his antagonist alone.

"He has promised to be here at six."

In a few minutes Dr. Wagner arrived. Lothard now turned to Tage's friends, saying in his wonderfully clear voice, —

"Before Lieutenant Aberney and I decide our cause with weapons, I desire, gentlemen, to address this question to you; which of us, Lieutenant Aberney or I, do you consider to have provoked the disgraceful scene that took place an hour ago?"

This question produced a visible embarrassment. Tage's friends did not wish to accuse him, and yet they could not deny that he was the guilty party. As the answer to Lothard's question was tardy, he resumed with a decided asperity in his tone, —

"When my question is addressed to the officers of the Swedish Navy, I certainly need not fear that the answer will be partial. It is merely an acknowledgment of the truth that I ask of you."

"Well, then," said the oldest of the three young men, "we must openly confess that Aberney alone is guilty in that which has transpired; but, on the other

hand, we must tell you honestly, Lieutenant Canitz, that we consider Aberney's conduct as only a consequence of the many unpleasant things that he has suffered at your hands on board the vessel. In his place we should have acted just as he did and sought occasion for a meeting."

Lothard bowed coldly, as if they had complimented him.

"We are only speaking of the scene which called forth this duel," resumed he; "and I hope you will all, gentlemen, do me the justice to bear witness that I then maintained a calmness and coolness which ought to have shown Lieutenant Aberney that I did not by any means desire to come in conflict with him."

"That we admit."

"You must also acknowledge that, notwithstanding this, there was no other course remaining to me but to challenge him, if I did not wish to appear to you as a man destitute of honor."

"That is perfectly true."

"Well, then, if you *now* acknowledge this, I hope you will do so still further, when I have added to the story Lieutenant Aberney related something which he forgot. He spoke the full truth when he said that my grandfather was a Swedish nobleman, who abandoned his country to go into the Russian service. It is equally true that my father served in Russia, and that I have been a Russian subject; but it is utterly false that I left Russia as a deserter. It is with the Emperor's permission that I quit the service, and as a free man returned to Sweden, which I have from childhood regarded as my *fatherland*. If there is anything derogating to honor in this act, then I am prepared to resign my office immediately. I leave it to you, gentlemen, to decide if any of you can stamp my conduct as unworthy your fellowship."

"Far be it from us," replied the oldest of the officers.

"This was my public life, as Lieuten-

ant Aberney expressed himself. Now to the pitiful charge that I ran away with another's affianced. No one knew better than Lieutenant Aberney that this is false. The young girl to whom he refers was so irreproachable in character, so noble and so elevated, that the one who dares to fling at her such a miserable accusation, commits a contemptible act, and has forfeited the right to be considered a man of honor; especially when, like Lieutenant Aberney, he *knows* that he makes a false charge. Were it not that the Lieutenant wears the Swedish uniform, I would not be willing to fight with him, — a man who so stains his *honor* that he makes use of an untruth to throw a shadow on an enemy and an innocent girl. It is thus with your comrade, gentlemen, not with Tage Aberney that I fight. Now I am ready."

There was in Lothard's manner something so truly noble, that it commanded the respect of all. When he ceased, the comrades cast looks of disapproval on Tage, who, deadly pale and with his face perfectly disfigured with rage, started forward to Lothard and exclaimed, —

"Prove that I have spoken an untruth, if you can!"

"Do you actually desire it?" Lothard put his hand to his breast-pocket. "I need only show your own father's letter to me. It is easy to prove that you have calumniated me; but it would be harder to prove that you had spoken the truth. And now we have had words sufficient. May the bullets, according to your desire, terminate this scene so little creditable to you."

Lothard drew somewhat aside. The Doctor and the oldest of the officers, who was the second, measured the distance, etc. Then the duellists took their places. Tage had the first shot.

"See that you aim well," said Lothard, with terrible composure. "I will kill you when my turn comes."

"Yes, when your turn comes," was all

that Tage answered. He raised the pistol and aimed. All eyes were directed to Lothard, who, with an upright bearing, erect head, and a granite calmness in his features, awaited his fate. The signal was given, a flash was seen. A cloud of smoke enveloped Lothard where he stood with an unchanged attitude.

"You aim poorly," was all that he said. He raised the pistol, adding: "I have a surer hand."

Tage's face, before crimson with excitement, became as white as the collar around his neck.

Lothard aimed the weapon. The seconds gave the signal, and Lothard cried at the same moment, —

"Off with your cap, Lieutenant Aberney!" The ball knocked the cap from Tage's head.

"What does that mean?" exclaimed the latter.

"It means that I give you your life," answered Lothard, throwing his pistol away. "I will not stain my conscience with your blood."

"But I do not accept such a gift!" shrieked Tage, perfectly frantic with rage.

"In that case let us reload and begin again," answered Lothard coldly. "I thereby give you the right to send a bullet through my head; but I will never again direct a shot towards you."

"I will force you to do it. Do you not understand that even if we were obliged to finish the contest with the but-ends of the pistols, one of us must remain on the spot!" roared Tage.

"Very well, then I shall be the one; for nothing in the world can induce me to harm a hair of your head. You have said that I was a renegade, a traitor, a seducer. My honor required me to fight with you. I have now shown our comrades (Lothard made a slight bow to these) that I am not a cowardly wretch. This was all that I needed to do; but there is no honor that requires me to

soil myself with your blood and become your murderer."

"Will you then make me yours?"

"Empty words, Lieutenant Aberney, do not become men. If you wish my life, then take it. Be so kind, gentlemen as to load the pistols," added Lothard, politely. No one stirred from his place. The oldest officer said, —

"Aberney, it is best to end this play, for you will only reap dishonor from it, if you continue. Come, let us leave the place."

"Go, without satisfaction; go without —"

"— Having seen my blood flow, you wish to say. Do I not leave without shedding yours, although you offended and insulted me? Well then, you will always possess the triumph of having done so unpunished. I only carry away with me the consciousness of having been affronted, and of having given you in exchange your life."

Lothard touched his cap as he passed by the other officers, accompanied by the Doctor, who was not the least surprised of the spectators of this little drama. Wagner could have ventured his life that Lothard would shoot down his antagonist, for he knew that he detested him. That he, whom Tage had so deeply offended, should grant his hated rival life, was directly in opposition to the knowledge the Doctor believed himself to possess of Lothard's character.

In perfect silence they pursued their way to the drawbridge; as they were about to cross it, Lothard turned to the Doctor, saying quite abruptly, —

"You are astonished that I did not shoot down that fool. Confess that you had calculated I should return from the place of meeting as his murderer."

"I admit that your behavior surprises me."

"So much the better. You will undoubtedly during the remainder of the voyage have still more cause for aston-

ishment. You have much to learn, my dear Doctor, before you know me."

Again a long silence ensued ; this time also Lothard broke it.

"Can you tell me if Professor Aberney has any brother? You know all about that family, do you not?"

Although the question was asked in a seemingly careless tone, the Doctor looked at Lothard with a long and scrutinizing glance before he answered. The face of the young Lieutenant remained unmoved.

"Well, Doctor, why do you not answer?"

"I was thinking whether I had heard of any brother who is living ; but I cannot remember it. I would almost dare to assert that the Professor is the only surviving member of his family."

"But he has, however, relatives of that name?"

"It is possible, I know nothing about the matter."

"You were in Paris last winter, were you not?"

"Yes!"

"Did you not meet any Swedes there?"

"No!"

There was another long silence, which was not broken before they reached the landing.

"Are you going on board with me?" asked Lothard.

"I will stay here until the others return ; but why do you go back so early?"

"Because I have nothing further to do on land."

He jumped into the boat, nodded to the Doctor, and was soon at the side of the frigate.

The Doctor stood and looked after him, holding the following soliloquy : —

"It actually looks as if I had lost all power over him. If he for a moment seems to fall into the snare I spread for him, then it is only to show me how completely he will destroy it. From the weak, spiritless youth, who allowed his

passions to rule him and who was like wax in my hands, he has become a man of granite, and that too after he had received the hard blow of losing *her*. Since that evening, when her flight very nearly cost me my life, he has not once alluded to anything that concerned her. He has made no response to the explanation I rendered of my conduct. It has been as if the memory of the young girl had disappeared from his soul. To-day, after the space of four years, it is the first time that he asks any question concerning the Aberneys."

During the whole time that the frigate remained at Gibraltar, Lothard did not leave it. He did duty on his own account and for others, silent and yet more reserved than formerly.

Tage had also become very much changed. His countenance, usually so unconcerned, was gloomy almost continually and never brightened by a smile. He withdrew as much as possible from the society of his comrades, and abandoned himself entirely to his animosity towards Lothard, which after the event of the duel had increased to the highest degree. He no longer had the hope of securing his revenge with arms. Add to this, that Lothard continued to follow all Tage's movements with the same exactness as before, and it will be easy to understand that he became more and more irritated each day, especially as his companions had since the duel shown Lothard a greater respect.

There is nothing which has so injurious an effect upon the character as allowing our wounded self-love to govern us. Had Tage once listened to the voice of reason, he would have perceived that Lothard at the duel manifested a noble self-command, which ought to have inspired respect. He would then have judged his own conduct impartially, and

not raved against fate as he now did. A great thinker has said, "When suffering befalls you, seek the cause of it in yourself only!" And the great thinker is right. If instead of attributing the fault to others, we sought it in ourselves, we should avoid much evil that is now engendered through the bitterness we feel towards those whom we accuse as the authors of our grievances. Tage had thrown himself into the wild stream of passion, without once attempting to save himself by the helping hand of reason or the better feelings.

In a few days the frigate weighed anchor and put to sea. The next port was to be Naples. Without anything occurring of especial importance, they dropped anchor in the bay of Naples, and the land where fire burns in the bosom of the earth and within the hidden recesses of its heart lay open to their view.

Tage, who had been moody and low-spirited during the whole trip from Gibraltar, felt a thrill of joy when he greeted Italy's beautiful shores. Like the other officers, he longed to go ashore, and was one of the first who craved and obtained permission to leave the frigate to "see Naples and then die."

With the usual precipitancy of gay young naval officers, Tage and his comrades plunged into the vortex of dissipation which was offered there. The days flew like minutes, and one would have sought in vain in Tage's joyful expression for any trace of the gloom which pervaded it when he was on board. It seemed as if sorrow and animosity were strangers to him.

Tage had never before been in Naples. Everything was new to him, and he had consequently no time to think of anything save the enjoyments that stood open to his grasp; so he drowned the painful feelings that tormented him in pleasure's flood. His stay at this renowned spot was like an intoxicating

dream. Two weeks passed as rapidly as if they were but days. Tage would have liked to hold time still, to prevent the orders the frigate awaited from coming, and so delay the departure from Naples. All joy has its shadow, however, and Tage's was no exception. In the first place, he had watch duty to perform; and to increase the unpleasantness of being obliged to remain on board at these occasions, Lothard was then his sole companion. Tage was thus subjected to the double annoyance of being bound to the frigate and of associating with his detested enemy.

About two weeks had elapsed since their arrival at Naples, when Lothard was sitting in the gun-room one morning reading the newspapers. He and Tage were to take the watch at eight o'clock. The door of Tage's state-room stood ajar. One of the younger officers was in there with him, and Lothard involuntarily became a listener to the following conversation:—

"What a pity, dear Aberney, that you were not with us at San Carlos Theatre last evening," said the young Lieutenant.

"Why so?" asked Tage, gruffly. The thought of the coming watch put him out of humor.

"You would then, besides the pleasure of hearing Rubini, have had a sight of the most beautiful woman you can imagine. Ah! I shall never again see such a face," sighed the Lieutenant.

"You can certainly see her in person once more," said Tage.

"How can that be possible? We may receive orders to set sail any moment."

"Well, what then? It does n't matter much to you, who fall in love so easily."

"Perhaps not; but this time the object is so unusually beautiful, that I can wager my epaulettes that every one who sees her will become captivated."

"Indeed! I suppose she was one of the singers."

"Certainly she was a singer; but she does not belong to those that appear at the San Carlos Theatre. It was Madame Dorbino."

"Ah! that celebrated French singer. So she is here?"

"Why, yes, did I not see her?"

"And you heard her sing? I must —"

"— Remain at your post," interrupted the young man laughing.

"At present, yes. Well, has she really as beautiful a voice as they say?"

"Now look here, my friend, you can't be more than half awake not to understand my words, although they are spoken in good plain Swedish. Here have I been tormenting myself all this time in trying to make it clear to you that she did not appear, that she is only in Naples on a visit, and that I saw her at the Opera. She sat in the same box with me."

"But if she did not sing, I do not understand where your enchantment comes from."

"Have I not told you from the beginning that she is uncommonly beautiful; that she has a pair of eyes that can make a man crazy?"

"Indeed! I would like to see the eyes that could have such an effect upon me. But still it would be pleasant to get a glimpse of this widely celebrated and beautiful singer."

"It is a happy chance that does not occur to everybody, and it will certainly not fall to your lot to be as favored by fortune as I have been, even if you are able to see her."

"You extravagant fellow, you do not mean to make me believe —"

"That I have spoken with her? Yes, that I do."

"Then you must have picked up a glove that she dropped, and when she thanked you for it, you boast that Madame Dorbino conversed with you a whole evening. I know you too well to believe you."

"It is all the same to me what you believe. The truth is, that when I entered the box I found two ladies and a gentleman there before me. One of the ladies turned her head as she heard me come in. Never have I seen so beautiful a face or such a pair of eyes. She regarded me with attention; but to hold myself strictly to the truth, I must acknowledge that her examination of my person seemed to be especially devoted to my uniform. After she had taken it in proper consideration, she whispered some words to the other lady, who then threw a quick glance at me and answered in French, —

"'He is in the Swedish Navy.'

"The music began. God alone knows what they sung, or how, I know nothing about it. Rubini, Monzocchi, all were forgotten; for I was only racking my brains to find some way of addressing my beautiful neighbor and of discovering who she was. After the first act the lady who was with her turned to me and said in irreproachable Swedish, —

"'I perceive from your uniform that we are countrymen, and this prompts me to ask if it is long since you left Sweden?'

"Who could have been happier than I? Of course I told her when we sailed from Carlscrona, in what harbors we had been, and how long we had remained here. To my great surprise the beautiful lady seemed to listen attentively to my words, although she did not take part in the conversation, and this led me to suspect that she understood Swedish. During the remainder of the evening, I kept up a lively conversation with my countrywoman. She made some inquiries as to who my comrades were on board, etc. When among them I mentioned Canitz, the beautiful listener made a hasty gesture and repeated the name Canitz; then she asked me, in French, who this Canitz was.

"I replied that he had formerly been

a Russian subject, but had for the last two years been in the Swedish service.

“‘And is called Lothard Constantin?’ asked she, in a voice that trembled.

“‘Yes, Madame,’ was my answer.

“She turned away and took no further part either in word or attention in what was said. When the opera was over I asked my countrywoman, quite daringly, with whom I had the honor to converse. She answered, smiling, —

“‘My friend here is Madame Dorbino, with whose name you have probably become acquainted through the newspapers. Who I am you shall know when we meet in Stockholm.’

“I bowed, Madame Dorbino took the gentleman’s arm, and I prepared myself to see her pass by; but she turned her charming face to me once more and asked, —

“‘How long does the frigate *Carolina* remain at Naples?’

“‘It is uncertain, Madame. It is waiting for further orders.’

“She bowed her head, and the next moment the beautiful vision had disappeared. I returned here dreadfully smitten with her, and fully convinced that Madame Dorbino was bound by some earlier attachment to Canitz, that enviable mortal, whose mere name was sufficient to call forth such extreme emotion in her.”

“What of it? A singer always has plenty of adventures; and as Canitz has been no saint, it is very likely he can count himself as one of her chosen ones.”

“Vandal, you have not seen this pure and chaste face, or you would not talk in that way.”

“Bah! talk of chastity in an opera singer; a woman who has spent her life on the stage and behind the scenes.”

Lothard left the gun-room and went out on deck. He thought of Madame Dorbino unavoidably, and wondered if he could possibly have seen her before she

was married in any of the Paris or London theatres.

At eight o’clock Tage took the watch. To his great surprise Lieutenant Steen was serving in Lothard’s place.

A little later in the forenoon a yawl shoved off from the frigate. Lothard was in it. “He is going to meet his former flame, Madame Dorbino,” thought Tage, who followed the yawl with envious eyes. “The miserable pedant has then been connected with theatre women.”

It provoked Tage that Lothard should go ashore on this particular day. Ever since his comrade had spoken of Madame Dorbino, Tage had been seized by a violent desire to see her, and he was consequently vexed at the thought that Lothard should, among all his other advantages, count that of being the object of the famous singer’s interest.

However deeply in love a young man may be, however unhappy he may consider himself, there is yet *one thing* that he never can hear with indifference, and that is, the description of a woman’s beauty. He may be never so great a philosopher, yet the desire rises within him to see *the one* whose beauty others have praised. This was the case with Tage. Madame Dorbino was somebody that aroused his curiosity, and to be true we must acknowledge that Tage desired nothing more deeply than to be delivered from the persistence with which his heart clung to the memory of Skuldfrid. He wished to forget her, but could not. He had done everything to accomplish this. While the frigate remained in port, Tage had hastened to throw himself into the arms of the pleasures that were offered, hoping thereby to efface all recollections of *her*; but after these diversions he only loved her the more. Madame Dorbino’s name awakened the desire to know her. In short, Tage was

enraged that Lothard had the audacity to go ashore, just when he most eagerly desired to be in his place. At other times he was provoked at the necessity of being with Lothard on the watch.

Tage paced the deck in great impatience, tormenting himself with all sorts of disagreeable thoughts. Finally he stopped at the sight of a boat which approached the frigate.

When the man who rowed it asked for the officer on duty, and Tage had allowed him to repeat the question several times, he had at last understood what the man said, and declared in poor Italian that it was he. A letter was then handed him. Tage received it and regarded the address attentively. It was to Lothard; but it was not the name on the elegant billet that chained his gaze. No, it was the delicate handwriting in which it was inscribed. It seemed to Tage too familiar not to make his heart beat faster. He turned the envelope and looked at the seal. A violent trembling shook his frame. He stared at the little seal as if it contained death, and yet there was nothing but a name.

"Even at the risk of life and honor, I must know what this note contains," thought Tage. "I must have assurance. O, if the wretch has deceived me then — then —"

The seal was broken. With fevered blood Tage glanced through the few lines. We shall learn their import further on.

In the mean time Lothard walked through the long Strada Tribuna, passing by the castle at S. Lucio to the Ristrazione de Viaggiatori, where he drank some Vino Grevo, and enjoyed the view of Somma and Vesuvius. He was roused from the contemplation of the prospect by a voice that exclaimed in French, —

"What a happy surprise to meet you, my dear Canitz!"

Lothard turned and recognized his former comrade in the Russian fleet, Count Gurtzkow. After they had exchanged some courteous words and spoken of old and new matters, the two young men took a boat and rowed out on the glorious bay. In the evening they concluded to visit the Teatro di San Carlo. When Gurtzkow and Lothard entered the theatre it was nearly full.

The former regarded every face very closely, directed Lothard's attention to several ladies that he thought especially beautiful, and jested about the notice that some of the charming Neapolitans bestowed upon the Swedish naval officer.

The overture began; the curtain rose and the first act was nearly through, when the door of the box adjoining theirs opened. Lothard did not notice it, so absorbed was he in listening to Rossini's music. Gurtzkow, on the contrary, who preferred the beauty of form to that of tone, seized Lothard's arm and whispered, —

"Did you see the beautiful woman that entered the adjoining box?"

Lothard jerked his shoulder impatiently at being disturbed; and at the same instant a fresh and melodious voice quite near him uttered in French, —

"Ah! did I not predict that we should get here too late?"

Although this was said quite low, the sound of the voice made Lothard start. He leaned forward hastily to get a glimpse of his neighbor. Two ladies of elegant bearing, accompanied by a gentleman, sat in the next box. The one whose voice made such a lively impression on Lothard had her back turned to him.

"What a pity that I could not hear the aria in the first act," resumed she.

"Is it my fault?" asked the gentleman, also in French.

"I do not say that it is; but —"

"But you would willingly blame me for it."

"Hush, listen to this trio."

The lady leaned back in her chair. Lothard drew farther into the corner of his box, while his eyes were fastened on his neighbor's beautiful neck, as if he wished with this persistent gaze to force her to turn round; but she apparently did not belong to the order of sensitive beings, and consequently remained in her position.

During the interval between the first and second acts, the ladies' escort asked, —

"Well, Madame, what do you think of Signora Se——'s voice? It has an unusual compass."

"I am very much pleased with it," was the answer.

"You are so serious. You do not seem to be entertained."

"O yes; but one cannot always feel glad."

"You have been out of humor ever since you sent off that letter."

"It is a mistake; if I am serious, it is because my heart has been seized with an intense longing for my native land," said the lady, with a peculiarly melancholy accent.

Lothard's heart stood still. He dared not breathe for fear of losing a single sound of this voice, which called forth such a world of feeling, within him.

"You do not intend to return to the cold North?" said the lady's attendant, and leaned nearer her chair as if to accompany the question with a tender glance.

"Perhaps in the future. I do not know. Let us leave this subject."

The conversation now turned upon music.

Lothard had drawn back into the darkest corner of his box.

"I must see this woman," he thought. "I must convince myself if — And if it were so, what then? Have I not made a solemn vow never to approach her, never to try to bring our paths to-

gether? For the rest — Is she really free? Does not another possess the right to her that I once dared to dream of. Perhaps she is married. Ah! then it is better for us never to see each other again. What do I especially desire? *To see her*, and then — die." Lothard passed his hand over his brow.

The opera was ended. Gurtzkow and Lothard immediately left their places; the former impatient to catch a glimpse of his beautiful neighbor, who had turned her back to them so persistently the whole evening.

Lothard stood leaning against the wall in the lobby, entirely concealed by Gurtzkow, who had placed himself before him. The door of the box now opened. The gentleman stepped out first and turned to the ladies, offering his hand to assist them. The first was a young lady with a face more original than beautiful. The other, on the contrary, possessed features so regular that she could, without exaggeration, be termed beautiful. Gurtzkow's low murmur of admiration floated by Lothard's ears without his hearing it. Although he had tried to prepare himself for the sight now before him, it nevertheless occasioned such violent emotion, that he unconsciously took a step towards the lady, gazing wildly at the lovely features; his lips parted as if to pronounce a name, but the next instant he drew back, pressed his cap down over his eyes, and leaned trembling against a pillar.

Gurtzkow was too much engrossed in the contemplation of the object of his admiration to devote any attention to his companion's singular behavior. A throng of people surged by them, and with it the two ladies and their escort, without either of them casting a glance at Gurtzkow or Lothard. The former followed with the stream, but the latter remained where he had been standing.

The following morning, when Lothard entered the gun-room, he found Tage sitting there alone. When he saw Lothard he got up and went towards him, surprised at his pale and disordered appearance. Every feature betrayed the hard struggle he had sustained with grief. When his eyes fell upon Tage they flashed fire. They regarded each other several seconds with dark looks; at last Tage broke the silence, —

"I have a request to make you, Lieutenant Canitz," said he in a vain attempt to make his voice calm.

"And that is?"

"To have a private conversation with you."

Lothard looked around the gun-room and answered coldly, —

"We are quite alone."

"Not here, surrounded by all these spying eyes and listening ears can the interview that I desire take place. No, what is then said must only be heard by God and us."

"It seems to me that you and I can have nothing to communicate to each other," said Lothard, haughtily. "We said all there was to be said in Gibraltar."

"You are mistaken; for I have in fact something to tell you in confidence which you must hear; therefore I ask you to meet me this afternoon at five o'clock at Pozzuoli."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then," — Tage took a step nearer to Lothard, clenched his fists, and said in a suppressed voice, — "then you will drive me to some extreme."

"But you know, Lieutenant Aberney, that I neither *will* nor *shall* fight with you. There is nothing that can induce me to do you any injury."

"This is not a question of any duel; we are only talking about an interview. What you may undertake to do after that is another affair. Or should you fear a *tête-à-tête* with me?"

"That fear is a stranger to me you ought to be able to attest; as it is a point of honor with me to grant an enemy's request, I will be at the place of meeting." Lothard left the gun-room.

Tage looked after him and said between his teeth, —

"Ah, you presumptuous fellow, now, now it is my turn to pay you for all the harm you have done me." Tage put his hand to his head with a gesture of grief and despair, while he continued his silent monologue: "To get my revenge I have had the courage to sacrifice the burning longing which has consumed me for years. I have but to go to Castellamare to have it gratified, and yet I do not do it. Why? Because I must see the wretch crushed. Ah! When he has wrung his hands in impotent despair and rage, then I shall feel that he has received a part of the retribution that is due him for all that he has robbed me of. Now I go to snatch his happiness from him and then enjoy his grief."

The clock of Santi Apostoli struck five when Lothard arrived at Pozzuoli.

At the entrance of a little house stood Tage. He responded to Lothard's mute greeting by touching his cap, and then, without saying a word, he mounted a narrow staircase that led to the second story. Lothard followed him in silence. They entered a small room containing a single window. Tage locked the door carefully and put the key in his pocket, a manœuvre that Lothard did not notice. He had gone to the window and stood there for a moment looking out. When he turned round Tage was sitting on the sofa with his head resting on his hand.

"I have already waited quite awhile for you to begin the communication for which you desired me to come here," said Lothard. "To speak frankly, I hope you may soon put an end to a meeting that cannot possibly be pleasant

to either of us. Besides, I must be on board before eight o'clock to take the watch. We have consequently no time to lose."

At Lothard's voice, Tage started and sprang up.

"You are to take the watch at eight o'clock," repeated Tage. "How much may you not have to live through before that." Tage stepped up to Lothard, and continued in a peculiarly mocking tone: "You have resolved never to fight with me; and happen what may, you will not harm a hair of my head. Is not that so?"

"It is."

"You are magnanimous." A bitter smile curled Tage's lips. "But I could venture my honor that this magnanimity will not keep you from breaking your resolution before the clock strikes eight."

"Do not risk your honor on that, you would certainly lose it," replied Lothard, coldly. "I would sooner shoot myself, if the temptation to send a bullet through your head became too great, than be impelled to break a resolution I had made. Lieutenant Aberney, I do not know what it means to break my word or to play with a promise."

"The future shall prove how much your proud words are worth." Tage crossed his arms over his breast. "You know full well that I must have hated you ever since my boyhood, when you gave me this," he pointed to the scar on his forehead; "that this hatred has increased tenfold during our voyage together and since the events at Gibraltar, you are also aware." In a tone of increasing irritation he continued: "You *dared* to grant me life, and you did it with the infernal conviction that this gift was to me more insufferable than ten deaths. To have your clemency to thank for a life that you have deprived of all value is a curse, and only the most studied cruelty could have conceived of such a thing; so if I to-day act like a

faithless scamp, you alone are the cause of it."

"Was it to tell me this that you desired me to come here?" asked Lothard. "If so we may as well separate immediately. I have no explanation to give you with regard to my conduct, and even if I had, I should not render it. *You* would never be able to comprehend my motives." Lothard took a few steps towards the door.

"Stay, Lieutenant Canitz," cried Tage. "Before *I desire it* you shall not leave this place."

Lothard stopped and regarded Tage with a calm look, then his eyes fell on a pair of pistols which lay on the table. On seeing them, he walked back again to his former place. An almost compassionate smile appeared on his lips, and he said, with the greatest indifference, —

"You intend to keep me prisoner." With this he seated himself on the sofa Tage had left.

"Yes, you are my prisoner," returned Tage. "You see those pistols on the table. They are loaded. They are intended for you and me. When I communicate to you that which has led to this meeting between us, you will be the first to make use of them as the arbiters in our case."

"Never!" answered Lothard, firmly.

Tage went to the open window and remained a long while standing before it. After a pause, that was somewhat protracted, he turned round and said in an almost jesting tone, —

"Above us is spread the clear and beautiful Italian sky, the most charming nature smiles around us; you inhale this air filled with fragrance and delight, which is capable of firing the coldest mind and of calling forth poetical dreams in the most trivial heart. Well, does not everything seem to invite to love, pleasure, and enjoyment?"

Lothard made no reply to this question. He seemed to be looking for the

purport of this introduction. Tage waited for his companion to say something, but as Lothard continued silent, he resumed, —

“And yet we meet here with feelings widely different from those I have spoken of. You are here because your punctilio forbade you to refuse an enemy’s request. You are extremely polite.” Tage bowed with an ironical look at Lothard. “I,” continued he, shrugging his shoulders, “who have not been brought up at an imperial court, and consequently cannot make any claims to your fine tact, have come here simply because I had something to tell you in confidence, which I hope you will be good enough to answer with a pistol-shot.”

Tage paused. It was easy to perceive that he desired to prolong the conversation as much as possible.

“Let us make a supposition, namely, that you have a sweetheart, who, through some sudden and inexplicable event, has been snatched from your side. Years have elapsed, during which you have lived in ignorance of her fate. You have looked for her everywhere, but without success. You come to Naples, and one mild and beautiful evening like this, with love and poetry in every breeze, you learn that the beloved one is quite near you. She sends you a note, asking you to meet her at a certain place. When you receive it you wish to hasten the course of time to the happy moment when you shall see her again. She, on her side, counts the moments until your arrival. What a world of felicity awaits you at this meeting!”

Tage ceased. Lothard had, it is true, become somewhat paler; but in other respects his whole appearance bore evidence of the greatest indifference. Tage looked at him in silence a long time, as if seeking to discover if this preamble had touched any tender chord in his enemy’s soul; but as Lothard’s countenance preserved its calmness, Tage continued, —

“Imagine that the woman you loved most of all waited for you with an anxiously beating heart, and that you would have given years of your life to hasten to her; but that you were by *some one* kept shut up in a place far from the spot where she desired to meet you, just as I now hold you prisoner; what would you then do to the person who kept you separated from happiness and *her*?”

A sudden contraction of Lothard’s eyebrows and a flash from his eyes gave indication that Tage had this time reached a vulnerable point in his heart; but retaining his outward composure he replied, —

“I should not do anything to this *some one*.”

“Indeed! You are singularly cool. What will you say if I tell you Skuldfrid is in Naples?”

Tage’s eyes, gleaming with jealousy, perceived with malignant satisfaction that Lothard winced at the sound of Skuldfrid’s name as if he had been touched with a red-hot iron.

“I should say that I knew it,” answered Lothard, gloomily.

“You know it,” exclaimed Tage passionately, and started towards him. “You have then seen her?”

“Yes!”

A pause succeeded, during which the two men could have heard each other’s heart beat.

“Then you have met her,” was the first thing Tage faltered, as if crushed; and he buried his face in his hands.

Lothard kept silent. Some moments passed thus. Tage raised his bowed head and said slowly but with emphasis, “Then you also know that she desires an interview with you; or perhaps —”

Lothard sprang up.

“What do you say? Does Skuldfrid desire to see me? When and where, speak quickly?”

A flash of fierce joy lighted Tage’s face, and he said in a mocking tone, —

"Do you hope to learn that from *me*? She has herself told you when and where you can meet her."

"Lieutenant Aberney," said Lothard in a voice constrained to calmness, although his breast heaved uneasily, "you have made use of a name that is dear to me, and of your knowledge of *her* stay in Naples, to trifle in the most unworthy manner with my holiest feelings. If this is a revenge that you wish to take upon me, then I declare it to be low and ignoble. You have wished to have the triumph of playing with the tenderest emotion of my heart, and I was foolish enough to believe for a second that there was truth in your words." Lothard made an effort to draw breath.

"You think that I am trifling with you. Look at me, and tell me if I appear as if I was trifling; you say that I wish to take a low revenge on you by *playing* with your noblest feelings. No, I do not play. I am not seeking so insignificant a triumph as you indicate. I want far more than that." He put his hand in his breast-pocket. "Ever since four o'clock has Skuldfrið waited for you at Castellamare. Here is the proof of it."

He handed Lothard the open letter. At the first glance the blood rushed to Lothard's pale face. He took it and read:—

"After having been as dead for four years to *all* those who once loved Skuldfrið, she to-day asks Lothard if he remembers her. If Skuldfrið is yet dear to Lothard's heart, then be at Castellamare at five o'clock, where she will wait for you until seven. If you do not come, then she will know that you have forgotten her, and that there is not even enough interest remaining in your soul to make you wish to learn what has been the fate of the Finnish girl since her sudden disappearance. We shall then

never meet. Shall Skuldfrið leave Naples without having seen you? without having obtained *Lothard's* forgiveness for the wrong she has done him? To-morrow shall give an answer to these questions to

"SKULDFRIÐ.

"NAPLES."

After the perusal of these lines Lothard seized Tage by the shoulder and exclaimed with terrible anger,—

"Wretch! What have you done?"

"I have taken my revenge, and you will only go to *her* over my dead body."

Lothard literally flung Tage to one side and sprang to the window. Tage however instantly threw himself between it and Lothard, saying with a horrible mockery,—

"If you feel a desire to jump out of this window, you will meet two obstacles: first, that you will break your legs; and next, that I will not allow it. I am now no longer a child as when you wanted to force Skuldfrið to sing. I have become a man with as strong muscles as you, and as long as I can move a single one of them you shall not leave this room. Besides, the time is past; it is seven o'clock. Skuldfrið now knows that you have forgotten her, that you do not feel any interest for her."

A stifled cry of despair escaped Lothard. The veins in his forehead swelled and every feature of his face gave evidence of a violent struggle in his soul. He darted to the table and seized one of the pistols.

"At last," cried Tage, and took the other; but it needed only this exclamation of Tage's to recall Lothard to his senses; for instantly there was a report. Lothard had discharged the pistol in the air; then he threw it out of the window and said in a suppressed voice,—

"You have acted like a scoundrel, and therefore have now freed me from the temptation to kill you, as you deserve."

He pressed his hand to his brow as if to force the rebellious thoughts into submission to the strong will.

Tage stared at his rival, almost stupefied by his behavior. Finally he broke the silence, while he laid the pistol back on the table : —

“Skuldfrid will never forget that you have refused her this interview. Ah! I am revenged, fully revenged.” Tage laughed scornfully.

“If any one had said to me, ‘You may have one hour’s conversation with Skuldfrid, but for this hour I demand your life,’ I would have sacrificed it without hesitation. You who have robbed me of this happiness have been allowed to do so unpunished. Ah, if you possessed never so many lives, you could not with them all pay me for this moment. Why I have not killed both you and myself I do not understand.”

“Nor I either,” muttered Tage. “What is my life worth? It was you, not me, that she asked to meet her! In this consciousness lies a hell that can only be counterbalanced by what you now suffer, and by her humiliation and grief when she finds that she is *nothing* to you.”

Lothard went up to Tage, laid his hand on his shoulder and said emphatically, —

“Open the door, if there is a drop of honorable blood in your veins. Do not force me to break it open; I must get out.”

“Yes, you must get out, most certainly, for it is now a quarter past seven; in three quarters of an hour you must be on duty.” Tage laughed savagely. “Break the door open, you will still be too late. Herr Lieutenant, you can now send a bullet through your head; you have neglected your service.”

Lothard jerked out his watch, glanced at it, then seizing hold of Tage he threw him to the floor, and jumped out of the window, reckless of consequences. It was a daring leap, but a seaman does not re-

gard danger. When Tage had had time to rise, he also rushed to the window and saw Lothard running towards the shore like a madman.

You think perhaps, my dear reader, that he went directly to Castellamare to try to find some trace of Skuldfrid. No, he hastened where duty called him. His blood boiled at the thought that he, Lothard, should be guilty of a breach of regulations, and while he hurried forward at full speed, it seemed to him that the wild tumult in his brain would make him insane. Lothard’s unbending pride rebelled at the thought of neglecting his duty. He had still three quarters of an hour, forty-five minutes, in which to gain the vessel.

“I must be on board the frigate within this time,” said he to himself.

When he reached Chiaja he found all the boats made fast. He ground his teeth with rage when he considered how precious the minutes were; they admitted of no deliberation.

“I must reach the frigate before the clock strikes, or consider myself dishonored!” And with this Lothard plunged into the water.

At the same moment the yawl which had been waiting for him at the shore arrived at the side of the frigate.

“Is the First Lieutenant there?” asked the officer on duty.

“No,” was the answer.

“Is he not? and it only wants a quarter to eight.”

“This time he has forgotten himself,” said one of the officers.

Fifteen minutes was all Lothard possessed to save his honor. If he delayed to the sixteenth it was stained, according to his view.

The momentous hour struck.

“Is Lieutenant Canitz here?” was asked. The lips of those present opened to say that he was not on board, when a clear voice answered, —

“Here I am!” Lothard stood upon deck,

dripping with water, but sheltered by the twilight, and with credit preserved.

The night watch had begun. The Captain and all the other officers arrived later in the evening. The frigate had received orders to sail, and early the following morning was fixed as the time of departure.

The Italian night enveloped sea and land in the folds of its dark mantle. It was exceedingly still. The warm air filled the heart with melancholy and longing. Only the sound of the guard's step on deck broke the complete silence. Lothard stood gazing into the darkness, his breast heaved unquietly. It was night within, but a night full of violent storms and bitter struggles. A despairing grief raged within him at the thought of what Tage had done. Skuldfrið, whom he loved better than his life and welfare, had summoned him, and he had not obeyed her call. Lothard could not comprehend from whence he had derived the power over his anger, so that he did not kill Tage on the spot. For the first time he cursed his service and the cruel necessity that forced him to return to the vessel, when he would have searched through all Naples to find her.

During the tranquillity of the night these stormy feelings gave place to those of sorrow and bitterness. His jealousy towards Tage, which had hitherto prompted all his hostility, had changed into a nameless resentment, a proud contempt. Tage had done him the greatest wrong that any one could occasion him, and had through this placed himself beyond the range of petty persecutions. The wound he had given Lothard was too deep to find relief in Tage's humiliation.

His eyes turned to Naples in the obscurity of the night. There, there he might find her again. He needed only to row over this water that separated him from the land, take his way to Castellamare, seek and perhaps find her, and then explain the cause of his not coming.

All would then be atoned for; but he was chained to the deck of the frigate, and when the day came to succeed the night, then the vessel would have left Naples, and perhaps separated him from Skuldfrið forever.

Had Lothard four years earlier been placed in the same situation, he would have lost sight of service and reputation. He would have killed Tage and plunged himself into misery, rather than have left any means untried to see Skuldfrið. Did he love her less now? No. But he had learned to restrain his feelings with his will, and to bear with an erect head the bitterest trials and the hardest blows that destiny inflicted. He had placed *duty* and his *sense of honor* as the guardians over his whole life and action.

The morning came and the frigate had left the beautiful and smiling shores of Naples.

Lothard stood at one of the gun-deck port-holes and followed with a melancholy look the waves that had been so dear to him, but which now bore him from the only being he loved on earth. When and where should he see Skuldfrið again? Perhaps never. Lothard felt tempted to curse this same sea with which he had a short time before desired to unite himself. O, thou eternally unstable human heart, in which love and aversion so easily interchange!

"I have been commissioned to give the Baron this letter," said a voice behind Lothard. He turned round, and saw Dr. Wagner, who handed him a little billet. Lothard received it in silence. His hand almost trembled when he broke the seal and glanced through the few lines:—

"Skuldfrið is then forgotten. Lothard did not wish to give her an opportunity to explain herself. May God forgive you the grief you have caused me and may he never more bring our ways together. Live happy, is the desire of

"SKULDFRIÐ."

Lothard was motionless a long time. It seemed to him as if some one had touched the wound in his heart with a red-hot iron. At length he asked the Doctor, without turning, —

“How did this letter come into your hands?”

“A gentleman gave it to me as the commander and I stepped into the yawl which was to carry us to the frigate last evening,” replied the Doctor.

“Do you know who it is from?”

“No, Herr Baron, I have not looked at it since I received it.”

At this answer Lothard turned quickly and looked fixedly at the Doctor, who bore his gaze with perfect serenity.

It was two days since they had set sail from Naples. The wind had been contrary the whole time; the frigate had cruised about two degrees farther south. In the afternoon *Ætna* had been in sight, and the frigate had now turned eastward and lay on the starboard tack, making about six or seven knots an hour.

It was a cloudy and ominous evening. Not a word had been exchanged between Lothard and Tage since they left Naples. All remarks on Lothard's part had been avoided. He attended to his own duty with the same promptitude and exactness as before, but without mingling in Tage's. Lothard's face had become paler and more serious than ever. On the above-mentioned evening, Tage, who had the watch, was walking silently and gloomily upon the fore-castle, following with his eyes the black clouds that swept across the sky.

With a peculiarly bitter satisfaction he sought a resemblance between his condition of soul and the storm which was soon to burst forth. A low sound was heard, like a warning, a mighty sigh heaved the bosom of the sea, as if it was

trying to get breath for the roar that was to issue from its lungs.

“Good, we shall have a struggle with the raging elements,” thought Tage. “I need to look death in the face to forget the hell within me. The howl of the storm and the din of the thunder shall at least for the moment lull my misery to sleep.”

“We shall have a hard night,” said a voice behind him. He turned. It was Lothard, who had left his place upon the quarter-deck and stood before him. Tage looked at him a moment; then he turned his back, intending to continue his walk.

“Lieutenant Aberney,” resumed Lothard, “we are going to have bad weather.”

At the same instant the lightning flashed from the black clouds and illuminated the space with its lurid flame. Then followed a peal of thunder, as if the heavens had fallen, answered by a wild roar from the ocean. It was the first chord which the lord of the tempest struck as a prelude to the concert which was to be given, and then followed a hush.

“We are going to have severe work,” said Lothard in a singularly mild and clear voice.

“Has the commander sent you to tell me that?” asked Tage in a scornful tone.

“Yes. He who is the Commander of us all. He who sends us the storm.”

“Do you do the Lord's errands?”

“Sometimes; at least I obey at this moment the influence of a higher power than my animosity. Lieutenant Aberney, we have hated each other?”

“Have hated; say rather do hate, and that with every drop of blood that is warm within us.”

“Do you not in such a moment as this feel the burden of an unrelenting hatred?”

“No.”

“This proves that your heart is insensible to everything but selfishness. You

have done me the greatest injury that was in any person's power. You might have taken my honor, my fortune, my life, and I should have forgiven you, but to deprive me of the only thing which was of value to me was more than I believed myself capable of forgiving, and yet *I* now offer *you* my hand in reconciliation. In the next moment one of us may perhaps stand before the throne of the Almighty; and I at least do not want to step before his judgment-seat with an unreconciled heart. I will not die with enmity towards any one."

Lothard extended his hand to Tage, but the latter pushed it away with the words, —

"In death as in life I am and shall remain your enemy. If the depth of the sea becomes my grave to-night, I can only congratulate myself to have thereby been delivered from the sight of you."

"I pity you," was all that Lothard said; then he returned to his post aft.

The darkness increased; the storm's wing swept over the waves. Lothard commanded the manœuvre, "taking the second reef in the top-sails and furling the top-gallant sails."

Taken in a bird's-eye view, as seen by those who lie upon the yards, a large rolling ship in the midst of a high sea and a strong gale presents a very singular aspect, toiling and plunging in the foaming sea which ever and anon throws a heavy flood of water over the deck. For those who furl or reef the sails under such circumstances, the motions are very abrupt. To lie up there and swing from one side to the other in such a perilous manner is enough to make the head of the oldest and most experienced sailor swim.

The sea grew higher and higher; the storm increased; and if any darkness in the blackest night can appear more impenetrable than another, then it is that in which a tempest approaches a lonely bark and furtively seizes it in its destructive embrace.

A rattling, rumbling sound like that which a thousand wagons would make on a stone-paved street was heard in the distance through and above the roar of the sea; then came the squall, the first shock, attended by a whirling spray that fell like snow upon sails and deck. Then followed a flash, nay a thousand flashes of lightning; for the whole firmament was in flames in a second. It was God's signature in immeasurable space. The storm now began its terrible song in earnest. The men on watch had already gone aloft to put in the close reef, the fore-top-mast stay-sail was hoisted in place of the jib, the courses were hauled up by Lothard's watchful care. He had meantime called the Captain, who came upon deck not much more than half dressed, and immediately ordered "all hands" to shorten sail. In an instant the crew swarmed out like so many bees from a hive; some of them only half clad, but all prepared to venture life and limb in rain, darkness, and the shrieking blast for the vessel and each other. The tempest increased. The second in command seized the speaking-trumpet; all the officers went to their posts as at a general manœuvre. Not a single light illumined this scene. By the glare of the lightning one could discover the forms with sinewy arms and energetic aspect that stood ready at the first word to spring into the rigging and fight a single combat breast to breast with the frantic storm, to prove which should gain the mastery, its power or that of man.

The officers and subalterns, who did not dare to rely upon any one but themselves, stood at the ropes groping and feeling their way to ascertain that everything was all right, so that no accident might happen. To see was not to be thought of. Through the roaring of the storm and the din of the waves was heard the second Captain's voice, —

"Lay aloft and furl the fore and mizzen

top-sails and close reef the main top-sail."

A binding flash of lightning revealed a long row of figures climbing up through the water. It was as if the sea had given up its dead, who dripping with the briny foam silently entered upon their opened course to heaven.

Tage, who was stationed upon the quarter-deck, and had received the order to see to the lashing of the boats, was engaged with some sailors in further securing the quarter-boats. Just as his whole attention was engaged in this, there came a terrible cross-sea, in consequence of some veering from the course, which first threw the frigate almost upon its side, and then fell over it with its full force, washing with it everything loose and all the living creatures on deck down to the lee side, where men and ropes tumbled over each other in an indiscriminate heap. In the midst of this tumult an unusual crash was heard like the wrenching of an iron bar, and then a cry. Before half of the bewildered crew could scramble to their feet Lothard's resonant voice exclaimed, —

"A man overboard!"

By means of a flash that illumined the darkness at the same moment the tide rolled its transparent grave over the vessel, Lothard had seen that the weather quarter-boat was filled with water and that Tage was busy with the lashings. Then he heard the snap which to his practised ear gave indication that the boat's davit had been carried away. The cry that followed told him further that an accident had happened, and without hesitation he called out, "A man overboard!" But scarcely had the words passed his lips before he jumped upon the rail, fastened a rope around his waist and lowered himself down forward the after davit which yet held, and to which the boat hung beating against the side of the vessel, with the bow down to the dark water. With

this rope about his waist, which was held by two men who had been with Tage at the time of the disaster, Lothard not only considered himself secure of his life (some bruises were unavoidable), but he also hoped to save Tage, in the case he had not fallen at once into the sea without being able to hold fast to the boat.

"I shall save him, even if it should be my last act," thought Lothard.

In the terrible darkness and deluged by one wave after another, he lowered himself down to the boat. Climbing over the seats one after the other, groping and feeling his way along, he came at length to the end of the boat, where his hand encountered something softer than wood. He felt the object more carefully. It was a limb, that had been entangled in the fastenings and kept up the body to which it belonged. The moments were precious. The body hung outside the boat, between it and the side of the ship. It needed only one lurch more and the man would be crushed; or another sea, and boat and body would be plunged helplessly into the depths.

With superhuman strength and animated by the desire of saving Tage, who had been struck by the oars in his fall and was found to be senseless, Lothard lifted him up. If Tage's coat had given way, a button burst, or Lothard's hold slipped, then all would have been over. Holding his breath, Lothard drew him up inch by inch. Now he has him; a moment more and he clasps Tage in his strong arms. He embraces his senseless and unrelenting enemy. He considers himself and Tage out of danger, when a wave, as mighty in its destruction as its predecessor, tears the boat from its last fastening and flings it down into the depths, covering Lothard and Tage with its foam. There they now both hung. Lothard had not lost his presence of mind for an instant. In the midst of the din of storm and sea his cry was heard, —

"Haul up!"

The command was obeyed instantly. At the rail they were received by the two men that held the rope. Tage was carried, still senseless, down to his cabin and left in the care of the surgeon. Lothard, a little later, received the order to watch through the night, after the second in command had first executed his manœuvre, and the vessel had been hove to under storm sails; the watch was set, and no further work could be done before daylight.

The storm still whistled and howled through the rigging; the frigate plunged about among the billows; but Lothard did not feel the lashing of the wind or hear its doleful whining; he did not remember that he was wet through and through. No, all was bright and tranquil within him. He was satisfied with himself, and thought, —

“Mother! you ought to be pleased with your son. Now, Skuldfrid, I am worthy to be loved by thee. Who is the better to-day, the Canitz whom you once so deeply despised, or Tage for whom you sacrificed him? Ah! I should like to attach to my life a whole series of proud and noble deeds, so that I could say at the end of my career, that my worth had purified my name. The unworthy weakness that my animosity towards him engendered is to-night buried in the depths of the sea. I have saved his life, in atonement for the blows I once gave him. I have saved it *now*, although my heart bleeds from the wound his last action caused me. I have returned good for evil. I can dare to be proud of myself. Life, with all its load of pain, yet possesses some glorious hours; it is worth while to have lived only for this moment, even if the remainder of my existence were to be as destitute of joy as the past.”

After the above-described events the days on board the frigate passed without

anything occurring of importance to our narrative; watch duty, exercise, conversation in the gun-room, and promenades on deck or below, were the order in their turn. After the stormy night, Lothard had become the favorite of all his comrades. They competed to show the respect they felt for him. Lothard himself was about the same as usual, silent and serious; but he now responded to the friendly approaches of his companions with affability instead of the almost repelling coldness with which he had before warded off every attempt at intimacy. Lothard showed with an exquisite tact that he fully appreciated the respect rendered him on the ground of a commendable deed.

All the officers knew of the hostility that existed between Lothard and Tage. The greater part of them were aware of Tage's course of action at Gibraltar. There was consequently something truly noble in Lothard's behavior, which inspired his shipmates with a high opinion of his character.

We complain that humanity is low and mean, that our times are demoralized. We are wrong. Wherever a good, commendable, or great deed is performed, people are ready to render it their respect, their sanction and admiration, and that so unconditionally that even envy at such moments is silenced. We forget ourselves to proclaim with jubilant joy some distinguished trait in any of our fellow-beings. If this is a rule that holds in general, then it is especially applicable to persons of such dispositions as seamen, with whom everything depends on the impulse of the moment. To these boisterous sons of the sea every grand action is something that does them good to the very depths of their souls, just because their hearts are less corrupted and more artless than those of the denizens of the city.

While all, from the Captain to the least of the crew, gave Lothard credit for

saving Tage, the latter lay prostrate with a fever. Day after day he was confined to his couch by this infliction, and his mental condition was not calculated to hasten his recovery. The very next morning after the storm, one of his comrades informed him whom he had to thank for his rescue. The knowledge of this poured fire as it were into his feverish blood. The thought that he had to thank Canitz for his life was torturing.

While he tossed about on his couch the bitter comparison between him and Lothard returned continually to his mind. The scene in Naples, when he had with wild joy gloated over the harm he had done his hated rival, stood forth accusingly before his memory. His ignoble conduct at that time, and his harsh words when Lothard offered him his hand in reconciliation, *all* came back to him and placed him in a scarcely honorable light before himself.

"If my father could have followed my behavior and his," thought Tage, "how severely would he have disapproved and perhaps despised me; and how high this stern and noble-minded man would have placed *him*."

His pulse flew, his blood burned, and Tage threw himself restlessly to and fro, continuing in thought, —

"But is it then so sure that, if we had exchanged roles, he would not have acted as I did? As to my father, how could he judge of my conduct? He has never known what it is to have a violent passion. He has never been obliged to endure the small stings which a hated enemy inflicts, and consequently does not know to what all this may lead."

Tage now adopted the usual course with us weak mortals, that of excusing one's own meanness. Once on this road, Tage saw in Lothard's act of saving his life only another reason to detest him.

There are persons who are only embittered by the good one does them who

are tormented because they are under obligation to any one, and who become ill-disposed toward each and all who place them under the necessity of acknowledging that they owe gratitude. This is the case with all selfish and egotistic persons. Tage was a thoroughly self-loving and conceited character; and like all such he was easily led in a wrong direction, especially when he was swayed by all the resentment which his wounded self-love engendered, as was now the case. Tage never forgot an injury, never forgave the one who had inflicted it upon him, acknowledged no superiority but his own, and regarded all the good that was done him as something to which he was fully entitled. On the contrary, he always forgot his debts of gratitude. With such an undertone in his soul, it was but natural that Lothard's behavior, far from touching his better feelings or awakening his gratitude, should nourish a silent but increased aversion. This became all the greater, as he perceived that he could not allow it to appear. He would then have encountered the reprobation of his comrades.

Wagner, who with a wonderful sagacity penetrated all the motives that lead one to evil and knew how to influence them with masterly skill, comprehended Tage's condition perfectly. And as he was utterly unable to rely upon his former calculations when he had Lothard to deal with, but always saw them fail, he determined to use Tage as a tool for the furtherance of his plans. During the first day of Tage's illness, Wagner gave close attention to every word, gesture, and change of expression. When the fever began to abate, Wagner spent hours at the bedside of his patient, conversing upon indifferent subjects. Tage showed an evident distrust of the Doctor, whom he regarded as Lothard's friend. One day Wagner turned the conversation upon the latter. Tage maintained a complete silence; but the artful physi-

cian, who behind the mask of indifference concealed his intention of finding out Tage, perceived full well that when he spoke of Lothard's remarkable qualities, Tage turned uneasily back and forth. Wagner now knew sufficient, and suspended for the time all further remarks about Lothard. The next day he said with his conciliatory smile, while he examined Tage's pulse, —

"You must make haste to recover, so that you may be perfectly well when we arrive at Palermo; and that may occur very soon, if the wind changes. We have had a stubborn, contrary wind, and I desire that it may remain so until I succeed in restoring you."

"What has my health to do with the contrary wind?" asked Tage.

"Nothing especially; but when we come to Palermo you ought to be brisk, and as this will take some time yet, I wish that our arrival there may be delayed."

"And for what reason?"

"A surprise is intended you upon your arrival there." The Doctor smiled.

"Me?"

"It seems to astonish you. You must know how much your comrades think of you."

"O, well; but now you speak in enigmas. Palermo, contrary winds, my recovery, a surprise, and the regard of my comrades, are all mentioned at once without my understanding a word of it."

"Neither is it my intention that you shall understand anything, as it is the question of a surprise. I have already said too much."

"If that is so, then it seems to me that you had better speak it out."

"Well, as it is something that you will be glad to hear, and which will consequently contribute to a speedy recovery. Your comrades intend, upon our arrival at Palermo, to give a dinner in honor of your rescue. That is to say, the dinner is given for Canitz, your preserver." The

Doctor's eyes rested on Tage, who at these words changed color and ground his teeth. Without appearing to observe these effects he continued, "Baron Canitz's wisdom and foresight never fail him. He has calculated correctly his advantage in saving you. He has gained two things by it: first, he lays you under an obligation; and next, he wins his comrades' friendship at a single stroke. It is always well to attach persons to us with the ties of gratitude, and nothing is easier than to *play* the magnanimous!" The Doctor laid a peculiar stress upon the word "play."

He had cast the evil in a very fruitful soil; for Tage grasped with avidity the thought that Lothard's whole behavior was a consequence of some mean calculation.

Two or three days after this the frigate anchored in the roads at Palermo. Tage, however, was not sufficiently recovered to leave the frigate during the time it remained in port. He had to content himself with hearing his comrades' accounts of the dinner that was given to Lothard; of the toasts that had been drunk; of the increasing sympathy they felt for the "Russian" comrade, as they had formerly called Lothard; of the adventures they had had, etc., — all things that roused unpleasant feelings in Tage's soul.

At last, after undergoing for a whole week the daily torture either of hearing how they had amused themselves, or how much they thought of Lothard, Tage received the joyful intelligence that the time of departure was settled.

"We shall have passengers with us to Alexandria, — a young married lady with her husband," said one of the officers to Tage, as he took a peep into his stateroom.

"That is indifferent to me," replied Tage peevishly.

He was almost recovered; but this gave him no joy, for he now dreaded the moment when he should meet Lothard

and be compelled to utter some words of acknowledgment for the service he had rendered him, and this was more trying to Tage than the severest illness. The same day that the frigate sailed from Palermo, Tage showed himself in the gun-room for the first time since his illness. He had chosen a moment when Lothard had the watch.

"Well, my dear Aberney, have you seen Canitz?" inquired Steen.

"Not yet," was the answer.

"I hope you two gentlemen will be as good friends hereafter as you have been foes before," said the second. "Canitz is a fine fellow, and has also proven that he is a good comrade in the moment of danger; these are qualities which deserve recognition, — do they not, Aberney?"

"Most certainly," admitted Tage. The second went up on deck, after he had first inspected himself in the glass and arranged his hair carefully.

"Upon my faith and honor, the engaging Countess has already turned the heads of both the Commander and second the very first day of her stay on board," said a young lieutenant. "Ever since we put to sea with the beautiful witch, the looking-glass has had to do service. It is devilish amusing to have ladies on board."

The young lieutenant now placed himself in his turn before the mirror and contemplated his fresh, good-humored countenance with peculiar satisfaction.

"Ah! You speak of the passengers who are going with us to Alexandria," rejoined Tage.

"Yes; she is a young and charming woman."

"Who is she?"

"Countess Nathalie Renstein. She is married to the commander's nephew, a young barrister who is suffering from consumption. He is horribly emaciated and as yellow as parchment, but rich. The married couple are now going to Alexandria; the Count to recover if possible

his health and his lost flesh, something which I hope for the beautiful Countess's sake he may not be allowed to do. She has already been married to this living skeleton two years; and as the Count was a perfect wreck when he united his destiny to hers, it seems to me that it is now time for death to loosen the bonds which were not joined by love."

"And such a woman you can call charming," observed Tage.

"Yes, my friend; the more of demon and the less of angel there is to be found in a woman, the more dangerous she is. I, for my part, detest those sweet, gentle, devoted angels, who are the same day out and day in; pure as snow, monotonous as a calm, and tiresome as tediousness itself. No, the woman I love shall be a bewitching little Satan who torments and infatuates me, precisely like our Countess."

"I wish you joy of it," said Tage.

"As far as you are concerned, my dear Aberney, I'll bet anything that you will become perfectly enraptured with her."

"I!" Tage looked at his companion with commiseration. "The day will never dawn in which I allow myself to be infatuated with a woman."

This declaration of Tage's was received with loud laughter by his comrades, and for ten minutes he became a butt for their sharpest wit. After a while the conversation returned to the Countess.

"I saw her and spoke with her in Naples at the San Carlos Theatre," said one of the officers. "Do you remember, Aberney, the lady who accompanied Madame Dorbino? It was no other than our amiable Countess."

"She is said to be related to the celebrated singer," remarked another of the officers. "At least she said so herself."

"But the Countess is a Swede," asserted a third, "and Madame Dorbino is French."

"Precisely; but that does not hinder the Countess from being related to her."

In such times as ours, when steamers and railroads have come into use, one may have brothers and sisters in all parts of the earth. One is never sure while on a journey of not stumbling upon a near relative."

While they were chatting and joking in the gun-room, waiting for the ten-o'clock drill, Lothard stood on deck and conversed with a lady who was looking at the rippling surface of the water as she toyed with the tassels of her mantle.

"But how can you assert that life on shipboard is agreeable?" said Countess Renstein. "It seems to me terribly tiresome; and one must either be a misanthrope or of a very limited mind to find this roving about on the ocean enjoyable. Mention a single one of the delights that existence on sea affords."

"If I named them *all*, you, Countess, would not understand them, and therefore I leave you to decide whether my comrades and I are misanthropes or dull-heads." Lothard said this with a certain ironical politeness.

"My words were perhaps a little too sharp," resumed the Countess, laughing; "but that is because I already foresee how extremely tired I shall become of it. I shall certainly die of *ennui* before I reach Alexandria."

"Impossible, Countess; have you not the very first day become the object of general admiration?"

"Indeed, I have not been aware of it."

"How unfortunate for the Commander and all my comrades not to have succeeded better in their efforts to snow you attention. Rest assured that they will do all in their power to make time appear to you as short as possible."

"The Commander and all your comrades have then the laudable intention of trying to entertain me?"

"I am fully convinced of it; and you, Madame, must surely have remarked it."

"And you?"

"I," Lothard bowed and answered with a cold smile, — "I love the nymph of the sea too well to even try to be agreeable to any other woman."

"You are not particularly polite, Baron Canitz."

"Pardon me, I am a sailor." Lothard left the Countess, for the pipe sounded to quarters.

Neatly clad in their working, but nevertheless true sailor garb, the men now gathered on deck and took their positions with the readiness and silence that distinguishes every movement on a man-of-war, awaiting the arrival of the officers. The service called Lothard away from the lovely Countess, who, as she stood all alone in the midst of these rough, bearded sailors might in truth be compared to one of Lothard's beloved nymphs, arising from her pearly grottoes to behold her sons and victims once more in life before she folded them in the arms of death.

Lothard reviewed his division, heard what some of them had to report, reprimanded others for their carelessness, said some kind words to an old veteran of a sailor, who complacently turned his quid of tobacco, and reported in the customary manner that "there was nothing to remark." Then it was commanded "pipe down."

Now the second approached the Countess, who promenaded with him and held a lively conversation, until the clock struck ten.

At twelve o'clock, when the exercise was over and Lothard entered the gun-room, he found Tage there all alone. It was the first time they saw each other after Tage's convalescence. With the delicacy and fine feeling that distinguished his character, Lothard fully comprehended how disagreeable Tage's position must be; therefore, he instantly resolved to appear as if nothing had taken place between them, and passed by him with a cold greeting. Tage again only saw in

his behavior the most offensive arrogance and felt irritated by it. He went up to Lothard, however, saying in a sharp and cutting tone, which indicated but too plainly that his state of feeling did not harmonize with the words civility forced from him, —

“Herr Lieutenant, I am indebted to you for having saved my life, and I desire to thank you for it.” He was pale; the blue eyes looked at Lothard with a sombre expression. He carried his head higher than usual.

“You do not owe me any thanks,” replied Lothard. “I have only fulfilled a duty, which you would also have obeyed in my place.”

“I doubt it,” thought Tage.

“A man overboard is the signal for one and all to assist him; that I was the first who hurried to his rescue, and that the man was you, is only a play of chance.”

“That is true. If you had known beforehand *whom* you were saving, you would perhaps not have been the first to assist him,” returned Tage, with a smile which was too scornful not to disclose the bitterness that lay concealed within him, and prevented him from either desiring or being able to comprehend that anything great or noble could proceed from the one he regarded as an enemy.

“Believe this if you choose; then you do not stand under any obligation to me,” answered Lothard, proudly, and left him.

Two days after this Lothard and Tage again had the watch together.

Tage, who ever since his recovery had thought with a feeling of aversion of the resumption of his duties and the time he should still be obliged to remain on board the frigate, had however, in the space of a few days, changed his mood considerably for the better. He gave

more attention to his outer appearance, and his face sometimes wore a cheerful smile. In a word, he had been seized by the same interest for the beautiful Countess that had taken possession of his comrades.

What was it in her that surprised him at their very first meeting! A certain something that reminded of Skuldfrið. There was an astonishing resemblance between them in stature, motion, bearing, and manner of speaking. Yes, even their laugh was the same. One who saw the Countess Nathalie with her back turned and heard her jest or laugh would have been tempted to believe it was Skuldfrið; but when she turned there was not a line in her face that reminded of the Finnish girl's regular features.

Tage was fascinated by the resemblance, and the Countess so awakened his interest that he felt happy in her society, longing for her when she was absent, and forgetting all life's annoyances in her presence.

“It is her likeness to Skuldfrið that attracts me,” said Tage to himself. “When she speaks, it is as if Skuldfrið's voice charmed my ear; when I see her walk or move, I forget all that has passed, and feel transported back to former times. When the sound of her ringing laugh meets my ear, it is as if I were still a youth participating with Skuldfrið in her childish frolics.”

It was an enchanting illusion to which Tage abandoned himself. The Countess, a woman with a peculiar genius for coquetry, perceived immediately that Tage's attention and politeness was of a different nature from that of the others. This led her to bestow greater favor upon him than fell to the lot of his comrades. She spoke in earnest to him, made reflections, jested, and entered into long discussions. For him she had always a friendly, sometimes a cordial smile. In short, every one understood that Aberney was the

Countess's favorite. It is true there were moments when she devoted herself especially to Lothard, and, as it were, diverted herself in trying to force him to render her an homage which he on his side did not seem inclined to offer.

Lothard had also observed the resemblance that existed between Nathalie and Skuldfrid, but it did not exercise any ravishing influence on him, rather the contrary.

"She is like Skuldfrid in the same way that a caricature is like its original," thought Lothard. "That which in Skuldfrid was enchanting nature and truth is with her art and study. The sight of her torments me, for she shows that the charms and graces which are a gift of nature to some persons can be imitated by others. Even ingenuousness and true innocence can be simulated by art. It is as if she profaned something holy when I see any motion of hers that reminds of Skuldfrid.

The result of this was that Lothard, unlike his comrades, avoided the Countess as much as politeness admitted. He was, however, too much of a gentleman to forget for a single moment what a lady has the right to demand of a cultivated man. Polite whenever he met her, there was yet something in his politeness clearly indicating that the courteous words and the attention he paid her did not proceed from anything but the habit of thus deporting himself with ladies in general. It is true there was now and then a glimpse of a repressed superiority, a something which said that he threw flattery and compliments to the fair sex, just as we give playthings to children to please them. This is just what irritates those who, like Nathalie, possess sufficient intelligence to understand what Lothard's subtle smile concealed.

We find the Countess on deck one evening after she had tried several times in vain to elicit a livelier interest from

Lothard than mere civility. It was eight o'clock, the first watch was set.

Nathalie asked Lothard several questions about Egypt, the habits of the country, etc. A pause ensued after he had given her all the information in his power. Tage looked at Lothard with envious eyes; it seemed to him that for the last few days Lothard had claimed too much of the Countess's attention. Suddenly Nathalie interrupted the silence that had succeeded, asking Lothard, who stood directly beside her with his look directed to the sails, —

"How long were you in Naples?"

"We lay there something over a fortnight," answered Lothard. The muscles of his face contracted involuntarily. The word "Naples" reminded him too vividly of the intense grief he had but recently experienced.

"You know Madame Dorbino, do you not?" The Countess fixed a penetrating look upon Lothard. His face remained unchanged, as he gave her a negative answer.

"Indeed! I could, however, venture my whole fortune upon the contrary."

"It is possible that I have known her under another name. What was she called before she was married?"

"I have never heard her family name."

"But are you not related to the favorite singer?"

"I was related to her late husband. When I made the acquaintance of Madame Dorbino she was already a widow. I suppose you know her earlier history?" Nathalie again regarded Lothard with a searching glance.

"No, Countess; I know of her nothing more than what I have learned through the newspapers."

"Strange." Nathalie's countenance assumed a thoughtful expression.

"What do you find strange in this? I have not visited either London or Paris during the years in which she has become celebrated, and have consequently had

no opportunity either to hear her or become acquainted with her."

"But she knows you."

"Has she said so?"

"Certainly not, but I know it."

"Perhaps you then know more than Madame Dorbino herself." Lothard smiled ironically.

"Ah! Lieutenant, there you are again with one of your sarcasms."

"Pardon me, you do me injustice; I only presupposed the same liveliness in your fancy as in your eyes."

"This exceeds everything. You thus assert that I make up stories."

"Countess Renstein, I have never made such an assertion about a lady; but I believe that you can be mistaken."

"Not at all. I will prove it directly. During my stay in Naples, when I was with Madame Dorbino one evening in the San Carlos Theatre some one accidentally mentioned your name. She became agitated when she heard it and made some inquiries about you. After we left the theatre she was very sad; and when I asked her if she knew you, she gave me an evasive answer. In a word, it all led me to the conclusion that —"

The Countess suspended her words as if to give Lothard an opportunity to complete the sentence; but he preserved an obstinate silence, and that with an air that evinced the most thorough indifference.

A pause followed, as Nathalie did not continue the interrupted sentence. Lothard's thoughts had meanwhile taken another direction. This time it was he who broke the silence.

"How long did you remain in Naples?"

"Four weeks. Madame Dorbino and we went there together from Rome."

"Did you meet any Swedes in Naples?" Lothard uttered the question without looking at Nathalie. She, on the contrary, had her eyes fixed upon him.

"Yes, I met several countrymen. Is there any one in particular about whose stay there you desire to obtain information?"

"Did you know perchance a Mademoiselle Smidt, a Finnish girl by birth?" It was with a violent effort to make his voice perfectly calm that Lothard pronounced these words.

Woman's ear is generally as fine as her eye, especially when she wishes to find out anything; so also with Nathalie. Although Lothard's face retained its impassive expression, she distinguished however a certain unsteadiness in his voice, which told her that the person whose name he now mentioned possessed a deep interest for him. Her resolution was instantly taken. She wished to convince herself of the correctness of her observation, and afterwards divert herself in tormenting Lothard if possible. It is always dangerous to let a woman discover a weak point in a man's heart. He can then be very sure of having a little imp of mischief in her.

"Yes, I actually made the acquaintance in Naples of a Mademoiselle Smidt from Finland," answered Nathalie.

Lothard turned quickly to her.

"She was then in Naples during your stay there?"

"Yes."

Lothard's breast heaved unquietly for some seconds; then he resumed, with the greatest effort to gain a calm utterance, —

"Had she left Naples at the time of your departure?"

"She was to leave there the next day."

"And where was she then going?"

"Herr Baron, the question you now ask I do not intend to answer." The Countess prepared to leave him; but Lothard said, —

"One word, Countess; why do you refuse to answer me? You can not possibly have any interest in concealing

what direction Mademoiselle Smidt took, or where she resides, in the case you know it."

"What interest have you in wishing to learn it?" The Countess looked at him.

"That of a man's peace, happiness, and future being dependent upon it."

"Fine words to cover your curiosity. Through me you shall not have it gratified."

"Countess, do you then really know her present residence?"

"I do."

"In that case I charge you, by all that is sacred, to tell me."

The clock now struck nine.

"Good night, Herr Lieutenant," said the Countess, smiling. "One must now retire."

"Then you will not grant my request?"

"No. Through me you will know nothing." She laughed.

"Is this your last word?"

"Yes, my last, and you can rely upon it that I will hold to it."

"Very well, then hear mine also; until the day that you tell me Mademoiselle Smidt's residence I will pursue you with questions, and keep such an espionage upon you that I shall either through strategy, persuasion, or some other means succeed in finding out what you wish to conceal, and the fault will not be mine if you suffer some unpleasantness from my importunity; for cost what it will, I must learn from *you* where she resides."

"Empty words, Herr Lieutenant; in Alexandria we shall separate."

"But I shall find you again and then you will grant my request."

"Never."

The Countess left the deck. Tage was enraged over the long conversation between her and Lothard. She had entirely forgotten him, only occupying herself with Lothard, who always and everywhere placed himself in Tage's way.

The next day we find Nathalie and Tage standing upon the battery and looking out through one at the port-holes.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Lieutenant, you are so gloomy?" said Nathalie, banteringlly.

"Nothing is the matter with me and yet everything," answered Tage, and looked boldly into the young woman's eyes.

"That is very much and very little at the same time."

"True, and yet our happiness often consists of little or rather of nothing."

"For God's sake, do not talk so seriously; it does not become you." Nathalie smiled with a childish expression that reminded of Skuldfrid. "Joy and merriment belong to your age, your station, and your appearance. I cannot endure serious and solemn airs."

"And yet you are so interested in Canitz. He rarely jests and seldom smiles."

"Who has said that I am interested in him?" Nathalie leaned her head on one side, in the manner of a girl of fifteen.

Tage grew quite warm about the heart. He even forgot to seek a resemblance to Skuldfrid in this motion, so charming did he find the Countess.

"My eyes have told it to me," answered Tage, with his gaze resting on the dangerous siren.

"Then you have poor eyes, Herr Lieutenant." Nathalie turned away from him and continued silent some time, with a bearing that told Tage that she was displeased.

"You are angry," resumed he at last.

"Yes!"

"But, for Heaven's sake, at what? If my eyes deceive me, then —"

"You ought to keep it to yourself; I do not wish to be their confidante."

"Deign to hear me. When one feels very happy in a person's presence, he envies all who enjoy the felicity he places

so high. This is the whole of my fault. I envied Canitz the friendliness you bestowed upon him."

"What a fool you are," exclaimed the Countess, laughing. "I did nothing but torment him."

"Even that may sometimes be a happiness."

"Possibly; but for him it was the reverse, of that I am fully assured. He can just as little endure me, as I him. We have a natural antipathy for each other."

"Do you speak candidly, Countess Renstein?"

"I am always candid. You know of Canitz's former life, do you not?"

"Something."

"Do you know if he has been in love?"

"Who of us mortals has not?" said Tage, evasively.

"That was not an honest answer," replied the Countess, with an impatient voice. "I want to know if he has been attached to any one?"

"Has been is not the right word; I believe he is." Tage's face darkened. The moment's fleeting delight was dissipated as his thoughts returned to the past and his unfortunate attachment to Skuldfrid, which at such times always stood forth in its full strength.

"Do you know the name of the person he is attached to?"

"No."

The Countess looked at her admirer and changed the subject of conversation; in a few moments she had dispelled the shadows which an unpleasant theme had called forth.

Soon after this Lothard approached the Countess. At his appearance Tage immediately left his place.

From that day Lothard almost persecuted Nathalie. As soon as he saw her he was at her side, yet he did not by any means besiege her with either petitions or questions, but conversed with her about travels, and the stay in different

places, sometimes so ensnaring the young woman with his conversation that she almost betrayed herself. Either she was continually on her guard and cognizant of Lothard's intention, or else her whole acquaintance with Mademoiselle Smidt was a fabrication; for she would otherwise, in the unexpected turns which Lothard gave the conversation, have dropped an enlightening word unavoidably. Lothard's often singular manner of conducting a conversation only resulted in entertaining her and exciting Tage's envy. As the officers saw Nathalie and Lothard so often together, the consequence was that they rallied him upon his assiduity in waiting upon the Countess. This banter was a new purgatory for Tage, which put his blood into a ferment and changed his attraction to the Countess into a violent and painful caprice. He could not bear to see her and Lothard talking together. He could not endure to hear her laugh when Lothard spoke to her; and though he did not dare to make himself so ridiculous as to tell Nathalie of all the resentment that this awakened, he was not able to prevent his face from revealing all the sensations that swayed him; but then Nathalie had only to smile in her peculiar childish manner, and the clouds fled from his brow and he forgot his vexation to enjoy the charm of her society. Happily for them all the frigate anchored at last at Alexandria; or Heaven only knows to what new folly Tage's envy and pique would have led him.

It is a sad truth, that wherever a woman appears dissension and strife always arise. Is the fault woman's or man's? May those who will answer the question.

Two winters had spread their white mantles over the earth since the frigate Carolina left the harbor of Naples, and again spring came with its blossoms.

Stockholm had during the cold season flourished with balls, concerts, *soirées*, and all manner of entertainments. The children of folly had forgotten that there was such a thing as seriousness in life. They amused themselves, and time flew like a dream.

Thus, when spring came with its clear blue sky and its radiant sunlight, the pleasure-seeking public of the capital began to feel weary. The young ladies were danced out, the *soirées* became monotonous, the concerts had nothing piquant to offer, and Thalia's temple stood deserted. During the whole winter they had admired Emilie H——, been charmed with Madame G——, and shed tears of sympathy at the masterly manner in which "Griselda" was rendered; and now admiration, delight, sympathy, etc., were exhausted, when "Djurgården's" (the royal park) hillocks began to exhibit a tender green, the anemones peeped forth, and one fancied that the lamps in the theatres looked red and dull compared to the sunlight. The painted scenes had nothing that resembled the budding shrubs. The young and courted girl found her adorers tedious; these again had wearied of admiring charms that needed gauze, jewels, and gaslight to appear to advantage. Add to this, that the most beautiful woman, after a winter of idle amusements, has lost more of her youth and freshness than during a whole series of calm years, and it is but natural that the spring sun shone only on pale cheeks and dull eyes. Yawningly all awaited the evening. The lions of the day were at a loss to know how to kill time. In a word, all the attractions of the capital were worn out. People sighed for the summer, and were visited by the most obstinate *ennui*.

The following appeared one day in the newspapers, —

"Stockholm has been honored with a visit from the celebrated singer Madame Dorbino, who of late years has been so

highly spoken of abroad. The distinguished artist intends to appear in several roles. Her first appearance will be in that of Agatha in *Der Freischütz*.

This was something new. An artist who had made a sensation in Paris and London, and to whom it was the fashion there to pay homage. The elite of Stockholm could thus bestow their admiration upon her without compromising themselves. Yes, it would even have looked strange if the Stockholm public had not hastened to show its enthusiasm for the French singer, when London and Paris had already done so. Madame Dorbino was consequently, before she had been heard, the object of an admiration which none would have ventured to bestow upon the most gifted native artist.

Ah, my dear countrymen! Why this foolish weakness for all that is foreign? Why this pitiful lack of independence in judgment? The French and English do not consult other countries before they applaud merit. No, they do it entirely independent of what other nations think or feel; but we Swedes must first let foreigners tramp down the path our judgment is to follow.

Der Freischütz was announced with Madame Dorbino as Agatha. All the best seats were secured even before the notice of the Opera was given.

We will visit the Opera house a couple of days before the representation. It is not yet ten o'clock. A rehearsal is to take place. The artists are collected in small groups. They wish to see the foreign singer. While they are waiting for her arrival we will listen to what they say. We stop by one of the groups.

"Have you seen *her*?" asked Madame — of Herr —.

"No, but I hope to have that pleasure as we shall sing in the same opera," replied Herr —.

"They say she is uncommonly beautiful," observed another.

"I have heard she is dreadfully homely," declared Madame —, who was very good looking herself.

"They say she is a saint in her morals," uttered another.

"An Opera saint," sneered Herr —. The remark occasioned great merriment.

"Yes, that is the right word," declared Madame —, whose soul was already filled with the most intense envy towards the famous singer. "I am informed that she at least has a mean sort of a lover, and that is Monsieur de Bris, of the Royal Opera in Paris. Besides, I suppose you have heard her married history."

"No, what is it?" All threw themselves eagerly into a subject that resembled scandal. They might possibly get hold of something really infamous to relate of this woman, who had enchanted the public of London and Paris with her tones. They might find some moral stain with which to soil her reputation as an artist. This would be a real acquisition. Approval always awakens envy, which sleeps with one eye open, and grasps eagerly at any grain of sand to convert it into a mountain of scandal. Such is the condition not only within the theatre, but over the whole world. Human vanity and self-love cannot endure to hear another praised. Hence come all derogatory reports. But to return to the conversation. Madame — took the word, —

"She was married to a musician by the name of Dorbino."

"Italian?"

"No, French. He is said to have heard her sing in the streets of Paris eight or ten years ago, and was so captivated by her voice that he married her a short time afterward."

"Ten years ago. That is to say that she is not very young."

"She must be considerably older than I."

"Indeed!"

"Some months after her marriage she

appeared in an opera, sustaining one of the minor parts. An English lord saw her and succeeded in persuading her to run away from her husband, who in his mortification shot himself through the head. She went to Italy with this lord, and when she had derived all the advantage possible from the Englishman, she abandoned him for an Italian. Three years ago she appeared again in Paris, made a success, was lauded to the skies, travelled to London and made John Bull forget his beef-steak and porter. Now for a couple of years past she is said to be connected with De Bris."

"The saint has thus allowed herself to be worshipped by all nations."

"Hush, here comes the director and with him a lady."

All eyes were directed to the newcomers, and even the most envious were obliged to acknowledge with chagrin that the lady who accompanied the director was possessed of uncommon beauty.

Madame Dorbino, for it was she, was so dignified in her bearing, and her tall, slender figure was so full of majesty and grace, that there was something imposing in her presence. Her form possessed that union of luxuriance and flexibility which makes the eye rest with pleasure on every contour. The white swan-like neck supported a head so beautiful, that when one had once seen these features they were indelibly imprinted on the memory. The dark, lustrous hair surrounded a brow so fair, that it was plain to be seen that the thoughts which were concealed within it were pure as those of a child. The large dark eyes were like a pair of beaming stars, which had borrowed warmth from the sun and clearness from the moon. The whole expression of the face was noble and maidenly. At the first glance those present rejected every prejudicial thought and mistrusted that Madame —'s story was a fiction which sprung from her envy of a rival who was to take her part.

"How beautiful she is!" whispered they among themselves.

The conductor took his place; the rehearsal began.

"She will probably sing her part in French," said one to another, and awaited with intense expectation the moment when she should begin. The well-known measures were now heard, and Madame Dorbino sang:—

"How calmly our life has flown,
Till the hour of our meeting," etc.

Was that actually the same aria that Madame —— had sung? Yes! but from what divine power had this woman borrowed a voice whose tone was so clear, so melodious, so full, and so magnificent in compass? From whom had she learned to throw so much warmth, so much life, so much soul into the tones? Envy was silenced. The admiration of the moment trampled it under foot. People forgot their own interest, forgot themselves, in the impression the song made upon them.

People at an opera, as elsewhere, are governed by the impression of the moment. The present impulse is for the artist, the actor, the writer, the power which directs them. Feeling determines for these children of the moment, whose whole existence lies in the present. They have no future. Their triumphs, their success, all are flowers which are won to-day but die to-morrow. Artists and poets share the same fate, being one moment the idols of the public and the next entirely forgotten.

The whole company had become so enraptured with Madame Dorbino's singing, that they wanted to carry her in triumph. Even the most envious were governed by it so long as the magic spell of the tones lasted; but when they left after the rehearsal and had reached the street, the enchantment gradually abated, and in the same measure envy revived; and this with so much the more strength

as they were obliged to acknowledge with inward chagrin that she had superior talent.

Candor compels us to admit that the impression Madame Dorbino's singing had made on the male portion of her hearers was such that they lacked all disposition to repeat Madame ——'s story. Men do not willingly throw a shadow upon the honor of so beautiful a woman. Women, on the contrary, embrace with eagerness every opportunity to injure one upon whom nature has bestowed any advantages. Madame ——'s story had thus every hope of being spread, through the readiness of her female listeners. In the course of a few days people had wonderful things to relate about the famous singer, which were all more or less calculated to injure her reputation.

Live like a saint, be chaste as the moon, pure as snow, harmless as a child, and you will still not escape slander, if you have the misfortune to excite envy in those of your sex. Against everything else you can protect yourself, but not from the insidious malice that proceeds from envy. Neither virtue nor goodness avail anything, for it only needs a single malignant tongue to utter some aspersion, and others will repeat it with avidity, add to it, and thus place a stain upon your honor.

The May sun shed its mild and genial rays upon Stockholm and its beautiful environs. To Djurgården, to Djurgården, every breeze seemed to whisper; but it was not there that the people resorted in the evening; they all flocked to the Royal Theatre to hear Madame Dorbino for the first time. While the ladies were taking their seats, the gentlemen still lingered outside the opera house, standing in groups and reviewing all those who came to the evening's performance.

At the entrance facing Jacob's Square were several young men, one of whom was distinguished by his free and open expression of countenance. The cravat, carelessly tied, apparently with design, the falling collar, the luxuriant whiskers, and the sprightliness in his whole exterior, gave evidence that he had not wasted his time and life in the wretched dissipations with which naval officers are accustomed to divert themselves.

"Well, my dear Aberney," said one of the gentlemen in the group, a tall, straight, and well-padded officer of the guard, "it is something unusual to see you. You are as if you did not exist."

"Neither does he exist," interposed another, "for he is in love, the poor fellow."

"Am I in love?" asked Tage, coloring in spite of himself.

"You think perhaps that no one has found it out, because you have withdrawn from society these last few weeks and live like a hermit; but you are mistaken. We all know that you are in love with —"

"Canitz!" interrupted one of the gentlemen, saluting some one who passed by quite hastily.

"He is also here this evening. Madame Dorbino's name has called to life all who were dead."

"Have any of you seen her?" asked Tage. The sight of Lothard had put him completely out of humor.

"Yes, I saw her this forenoon when she was out riding," replied a slim little dandy. "The French secretary of legation pointed her out to me."

This little fellow was continually boasting of his acquaintances among the legation, and was always the one who had seen and heard more than others.

"Well, how does she look?" asked those around him.

"So so, not exactly to my taste; she is somewhat too fat and has eyes that denote her French origin too plainly."

"She is spoken of as uncommonly beautiful."

"As I say, a little too fleshy. But you know my taste, I like delicate and distinguished features. I am an aristocrat as far as outward appearance is concerned."

"What a pity that you have n't got a *de* or a *von* before your name, my good Berglof," said the officer of the guard. The others laughed.

"Now it is time to go in," said Tage. They all went together to the upper circle, where they took their places.

Tage looked around through his opera-glass to discover Lothard; but he was not to be seen.

The overture began; the curtain rose, and the audience gave as little attention as possible to the first act.

In the lower private box at the right hand sat an elderly man, who yet retained the power of his manhood. He had drawn back in the corner as far as he could, evidently with the intention of seeing and hearing, without being seen. In the opposite box at the left hand we find Lothard. He sat with his back turned to the audience, so that he could not be observed from the rest of the house.

In the interval after the first act, one of the gentlemen in Aberney's company said to him, —

"See there, the Countess Renstein is in the dress-circle. Well, Aberney, are you not going to salute the object of your admiration?"

Tage turned his eyes to the dress-circle, where Nathalie sat, dressed with exquisite taste and simplicity. He bowed. The Countess smilingly responded to his salute, and the Lieutenant of the guard whispered directly, —

"You enviable mortal, who can flatter yourself upon having obtained a smile from *her*. I have not been so fortunate as to get a glance."

The second act began. When the

curtain rose, Tage very nearly made an exclamation. He grasped his neighbor's arm involuntarily and pressed it between his strong fingers.

"Can I not see that she is beautiful without your drawing my attention to it in such a forcible manner?" whispered his neighbor impatiently.

Agatha's aria began. Every eye was fastened upon the features of the singer, every ear was chained to her tones. There were, however, three persons who expressed so great emotion when they saw her, that they failed to hear the beginning of the beautiful aria.

The elderly gentleman in the right-hand box murmured, as he passed his hand over his brow, —

"The snow-white dove has thus strayed into this raven's nest! Poor child, that I should find you in such a place."

"O my God, was it *here* that I should see *her* again!" thought Tage, and gazed at the apparition with wild looks.

"It is she, — she, more beautiful than ever!" whispered Lothard. "That I should find the idol of my heart on the stage, it is terrible!" He leaned his head back, as if annihilated by grief. "Lord of destiny! thou art severe not to let me retain the chaste and beautiful vision. Now she is dead to me; what infernal game did fate intend to play with my human weakness, when it threw this beautiful monument of *her* in my way. I have her outer person before my eyes without being able to trace anything of the heart full of innocence, goodness, love, and cruelty, which constituted all to me."

"How calmly our life has flown," etc., sang Madame Dorbino.

During the spring-time of Lothard's dawning love he had never heard Skuldfrið sing. Only once before had the tones of her voice met his ear, and then the child's notes had so charmed him, that he tried to force her to repeat the little song. We know what then fol-

lowed. Now this voice, so warm, so glowing, so wonderful, flowed into his heart and yet filled it only with bitterness. These tones, which ought to have soothed his mind, called to life his dark and passionate feelings. It seemed to Lothard that he became worse as he listened to the song. It was as if he had at the sight of the singer lost faith in the good, the pure, and the noble.

Lothard's eyes were fastened upon her features, but she had not yet lifted hers to him. It was to her as if the audience had not existed. She seemed to have forgotten these hundreds of eyes that were directed upon her, the ears that were listening. Her soul was in the song, and the song was also a reflection of her soul. It was the true artist, not the actress striving for applause. The minor considerations which lead to those eager attempts at effect, in order to excite admiration, were not once apparent in Madame Dorbino.

The first aria was ended, the applause and bravos seemed as if they would never cease. At last the storm of approbation subsided; "Max" entered.

Just at this moment Madame Dorbino happened to look up at the boxes. She started, and closed her eyes as if blinded by a flash of lightning. A violent trembling shook her frame and she forgot to take up the strain. She recovered herself, however, made a sign to the conductor, who was obliged to repeat the two last measures which she had failed to accompany. Did she sing the rest of the part as well? As well? We must answer no; but the audience did not observe the unsteadiness of her voice, the unequal delivery; it had once for all been seized by the giddiness of enchantment which carried away the cold, criticising reason. Applause and acclamations followed the close of the second act; and when Madame Dorbino appeared before the curtain, the audience gave vent to their admiration by cheers, stamping,

and clapping of hands, — a singular way of expressing its approbation.

There were three persons, however, who gave no sign of admiration. Not by a single gesture did they indicate what impression the singing had made upon them. Those three were they who in Madame Dorbino had recognized — *Skuldfrid*.

"She has seen me," thought Lothard. "After this recognition she has sung poorly. Then she still retains the memory of the past. But she, the distinguished singer, does not imagine that the past is now as if it were buried, and that I am with this evening completely changed. I know now that *Skuldfrid* shall never more be found by me."

Not once did Madame Dorbino direct her glance to Lothard during the course of the opera. She sang, sang so that the opera house re-echoed with acclamations, but she sang with cheeks as pale as death. The opera was over, the curtain fell; but the audience wanted once more to see the beautiful singer, once more to render her their homage, and she was obliged to appear. When she came in to acknowledge this good-will, she raised a shy, an almost trembling look to Lothard. He had risen. He regarded the celebrated singer with a scornful smile upon his lips, a smile full of commiseration. At this sight the head that had just been bowed in humility was raised. *Skuldfrid* made an obeisance to the audience that was at once dignified and grateful.

Lothard rushed down the stairs, passing both strangers and acquaintances, hailed his coachman, and was driven to Skeppsholmen, where he resided.

The next day the papers were full of the amplest encomiums with regard to Madame Dorbino's singing, as well as her acting and appearance.

While the people at the cafés, hotels, *Norrbro*, and Gustaf Adolf's Square, in private and public circles, only talked about the performance of yesterday, we will make a visit to the object of all this interest.

In the latter part of the month of March, Countess Renstein had had an elegant suite of rooms fitted up in her house, on the story above her own. Who should occupy these rooms was a secret she had kept, until the day Madame Dorbino arrived and took possession of them, thus opening a new field for conjecture. The better informed knew besides that the Countess had hired a summer residence for the celebrated singer in the vicinity of her own villa at Djurgården. Did the beautiful Frenchwoman intend to remain some time in Sweden, or what could be the reason of this arrangement? This was a question which all asked of each other. We do not by any means intend to enlighten the curious beforehand, but will instead pay a visit to Madame Dorbino.

It is the morning after her first appearance. She is sitting in a charming little cabinet, filled with flowers and lighted by the clear and brilliant rays of the May sun.

Let us contemplate the young woman for a moment. When we last saw her she was a girl of seventeen; a child, unacquainted with life, its shadows of vice and suffering, its cares, its cabals, and its tempting joys. Six years had now elapsed. The careless and unconcerned child had become a woman. The unsophisticated country girl, who knew no law for her behavior save the impulse of the moment, who did not know the meaning of the word "disguise," had become a distinguished singer and an equally distinguished actress. She had from an artless child of nature changed to a person well versed in simulation. She who at seventeen knew only of Ek-torp and its surroundings, having seen

no other people than those that assembled in the little village church, had now spent six years in the largest capitals of the world, and in the most noted opera houses of Europe, surrounded by their cabals, intrigues, and loose morals. What changes must she not have undergone!

Look at her as she sits there in her snow-white morning-dress, with her luxuriant tresses simply arranged, just as when she was a young girl. We could be tempted to believe that time had stood still, and that we had Skuldfrið before us, just as she was at Ektorpe. The rouge and powder had not yet affected the pure and fresh complexion. Flattery had not been able to efface the expression of childish innocence which had formerly characterized her features, or to give her pure and open look anything of that bold assurance which usually becomes the result. The only perceptible change in Skuldfrið's outward appearance was that her figure had acquired a more perfect development and her features exhibited more reflection than in the careless years of youth.

Before her on the table lay the daily papers, all filled with her praises, besides a heap of perfumed but unopened billets. Not a glance did she bestow on the latter. She sat absorbed in thought, holding in her hand a letter yellow with age and so worn through reading that it more resembled a fragment than an epistle. Her gaze rested upon the pale characters. What letter was it? It was the one Lothard had written to Skuldfrið after her visit to Kronobro.

"So I have lived to see the hour of our meeting," thought Skuldfrið. "I have then at length gained the object for which I have striven, namely, to meet those eyes once more, and again see them fastened upon me; but O God, with what an expression!" Skuldfrið pressed her hand over her eyes. "It was not thus that I imagined our first meeting;

and yet his non-appearance in Naples ought to have told me that I had ceased to be anything to him. It was terribly bitter to meet his glance, full of scorn and commiseration. Ah! I had dreamed that he would smile lovingly upon me." Skuldfrið pressed the letter to her lips and to her heart with passionate tenderness, while she continued in thought: "O, I am a foolish child, who once possessed this heart, and threw it away like an unworthy plaything! How was it possible to misunderstand this letter, in which every word breathes nobleness! I have sinned deeply against my heart's friend. Shall I never be able to atone for it? Atone? Will he even accept any expiation from me? No, no, he has forgotten Skuldfrið, and to Madame Dorbino he gives his contempt. What was all the applause, all the homage that was rendered me, when he had only scorn upon his lips." Skuldfrið sprang to her feet and placed herself before a mirror, continuing in thought: "In all languages they have told me that I was beautiful." She clasped her hands: "O, Father in Heaven! if it is so, make me beautiful in his eyes; let me once more read love and forgiveness in his gaze, and I will be willing to die the next moment at his feet."

She was interrupted by the entrance of a middle-aged servant, a sort of compound of lady and domestic, with the true French appearance, lively brown eyes, black hair, and somewhat dark complexion.

"Madame, there is a gentleman who wishes to see you," said she, in fluent French.

"I do not receive any one," answered Skuldfrið.

"I told him so, Madame, but then he gave me this card to hand to you."

Skuldfrið took it. She had no sooner cast her eyes upon it than she uttered a cry and hastened out.

In the little dining-saloon was the

same middle-aged gentleman who had sat in the right-hand box the evening before ; he stood in the middle of the room, with his arms crossed and his gaze fastened upon the door through which the servant had disappeared. Suddenly it flew open and Skuldfrið hastened towards him, but stopped half-way as if shrinking and afraid to follow the first impulse of her heart. At the sight of this hesitation he said, —

“However life may shape itself for you, I shall always remain your friend, my child ; remember that I once told you this.” Then he reached out his arms toward her. Skuldfrið threw herself into the open embrace, exclaiming through her tears, —

“My friend, my dear beloved friend !” She twined her arms around his neck, whispering, “How happy I do feel at this moment.”

The tears rolled down Skuldfrið’s cheek. Aberney pressed her closely to his breast, saying with emotion, —

“Ungrateful child, how could you ever abandon *your father’s brother* and leave him so long in ignorance of your fate ?”

“My father’s brother,” stammered Skuldfrið, and pressed her face to his breast ; “you know this and yet do not push me from you !”

“Skuldfrið, I knew this long before we parted,” answered Aberney, and passed his hand caressingly over the beautiful head.

“And I fled, fled because they told me that you did not wish to see or hear the name of Harmen’s daughter. Uncle, uncle, what years of bitter suffering has not this conviction occasioned !”

After the first outburst of joy, the first exchange of questions and answers, the swelling feelings which the meeting had excited became allayed, and then followed a calmer account of what had transpired, the motives which had prompted Skuldfrið to act as she had done, etc. With the same simple and

undisguised frankness that characterized her as a young girl, she related to Aberney all that had occurred. She spoke with emotion about the past, and of that which had reference to her mother ; but she touched quite lightly upon all the bitter trials to which she had herself been subjected. We will not forestall events by communicating Skuldfrið’s narration.

At dinner-time Aberney rose to go ; but Skuldfrið seized his hand and said with a charming smile, —

“Why, Uncle, you are not going to leave me already ? Can you not bestow this day upon Skuldfrið ?”

“Child, this and all my days would I give you ; but of what service can I now be to the *celebrated singer* ?” Aberney pronounced the last words with a shade of bitterness.

During the whole of Skuldfrið’s account he had sat silent, without indicating by the smallest gesture or change of manner whether he sanctioned or disapproved of her course. When she spoke of the motives that had induced her to become a singer, Aberney only leaned his head on his hand and sighed. There was a certain something in this motion which told Skuldfrið that he disapproved of the step she had taken. Now his words contained a plain proof of it.

“Uncle, if you so think, why did you seek me ?”

“I wished to see you again. I wished to know why you fled, without giving me any reason for your behavior, and why you left me for so many years in ignorance of your fate. Finally, I wanted to know what had become of the charming child I once held dearer than anything else upon earth. Had the world ruined her, then —”

“You would not have recognized her as your niece,” whispered Skuldfrið.

The Professor’s brow darkened. He looked at Skuldfrið with a stern expression, saying, —

“My niece is now — an actress. What

do I know of Madame Dorbino? I do not know the *habits* of the distinguished singer. I only know that she has spent years of her life on the stage. Did you not then reflect a moment upon the dubious position in which you placed yourself when you became —”

“An artist,” interposed Skuldfrið, earnestly. “Uncle,” added she with warmth, “I only thought that art would be able to reconcile me to a life which the guilt of others had made wretched; I felt that I was born an artist, and that I only followed my calling when I became what I am. You cannot, Uncle, with your enlightened and unprejudiced mind, wish to stamp the dramatic career as despicable. Your most ideal conceptions and most beautiful compositions would have been as dead letters, had not the singer or actor given life to them. It is not the opera that degrades and demoralizes; for I can remain an honorable person anywhere and everywhere, if I myself desire it. If I love art, the beautiful that it embodies, and live exclusively for the noble purpose of trying to incorporate myself truly and faithfully with everything elevated and sublime that I delineate as an artist, then, Uncle, I also separate my mind and thoughts from that which is low and degrading.”

“It is impossible when one spends her whole life surrounded by the impure atmosphere of the theatre, encompassed by intrigues and frivolity, and with artifice and deception for a vocation.”

“Uncle,” exclaimed Skuldfrið with glowing cheeks, “where in life do we escape these things? Nowhere. Whether we are actors upon the world’s stage or the theatre’s, we are always visited or contaminated by evil. It depends upon ourselves how much of it shall encumber us. Theatrical life has its dark sides, I know that; but if I, with my heart full of ardor for my art, love it, and only it, then I do not perceive all the wickedness that surrounds me. I need not

allow myself to become initiated into the mysteries behind the scenes; they are to me indifferent, they do not belong to my artistic career, and that which does not concern it is of no consequence to the true artist. You say that our vocation is one of artifice and deception. No, Uncle, not for the artist. To him the image he shall represent is a part of himself. He is seized with the idea of the author, and the poet’s words take life and form. The actor who makes deception his aim is not an artist, and will never be able to present anything but a caricature of the poet’s conception. He will not have the power to transport or carry the public with him. If this is true of the dramatic artist, how much more then of the *lyric*. Uncle,” Skuldfrið seized his hand and continued with perfect inspiration, “does one need dissimulation and deceit to be transferred into the character or the feelings which the tones delineate? Is it not rather nature and true sentiment that is needed? Ah! I know that when I sing, all else but the song is forgotten. My own personality is no more. I live and my whole being is in the music. I am an echo of that which the composer dreamed, I am a part of him, not of myself. When my heart has bled from sorrow and sore trials, when all around me was night, then it became bright when I was lifted on the wings of song above a world which was so bitter. I then fled from it to a better. It was as if I had come nearer to God. I did not think then of the gas-lights, the scenes, or the audience.”

Skuldfrið ceased. She had spoken with that expression of truth which only they have who clothe their heart’s warmest and holiest feelings in words.

Upon the Professor, Skuldfrið’s words made a strong impression. He recognized the truth of them; but still his prejudice rose against the idea that his *niece* should be an opera singer. We must remember that Aberney belonged

to the older generation, and that prejudices imbibed in childhood are the longest preserved. He had all his life through felt an insurmountable antipathy to theatre people. It therefore pained him to find his darling, his long-sought-for and regretted Skuldfrið, belonging to this class of persons, whom he could not tolerate, and of whom he had the lowest opinion. Skuldfrið's enthusiastic words placed the dramatic art in quite another light than that in which Aberney had hitherto regarded it; but yet the old prejudice remained and opposed the impression the young woman had made. So he said, —

"It may be that the picture you draw is correct, but it is equally true that theatrical life gives the character a frivolous tendency. The freedom of behavior and way of speaking which prevails among actors and actresses, the flattery that is lavished upon talent, all contributes unavoidably to ruin the heart and to sow the seeds of bad and immoral principles."

Skuldfrið laid her hand on Aberney's shoulder and looked at him with an expression so innocent and ingenuous that she resembled a child.

"Uncle," said she with deep earnestness, "look into my eyes and tell me if you think these years which I have spent on the stage has ruined my heart or demoralized my nature? You must read in every one of my features that I am the same as when we parted, for truth has its unmistakable stamp. I was then an ignorant child, without suspicion that I had — much to atone for." An expression of deep melancholy passed over her countenance, but disappeared as quickly, and she added with a smile which reminded of former times: "Ah, I read in the expression of your eyes that you have found in me the same old Skuldfrið, with the difference, you dear, good Uncle, that she will never more run away from you out of false pride."

It is impossible to cling to a prejudice any longer, when lips so charming smile upon one. The Professor was conquered. He was almost reconciled to possess a singer in his niece. Nevertheless he rose for the second time to go.

"Will you not take dinner with me?" asked Skuldfrið.

"Yes, my child, I would like to very much; but when I reached the entrance of this house, I met *some one* who also intended to call here." The Professor smiled. "I forced this *some one* to go back home and wait for my return. Now I fear that he will be impatient if I stay any longer."

Skuldfrið blushed. She guessed immediately that this somebody was Tage. His name had not yet been mentioned during the interview. The thought of him gave her a disagreeable feeling, and the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"Are you at leisure in the afternoon?" inquired the Professor, who observed full well the fine color Skuldfrið had acquired.

"Yes, the whole day."

"Very well, then I will return and bring Tage with me. If you are the same as formerly, it will assuredly give you great pleasure to see the friend of your childhood again."

"Most certainly!" Skuldfrið could not say more; she felt oppressed. When the Professor had gone, she sat quiet a long while.

"My faithful friends from childhood, they seek me; but *he* — Ah, my God, how could I hope it? What I am to him I ought to know, and yet how deeply he loved me! Can it be that this love is dead, or has it been replaced by another? Impossible!"

In a little house somewhere in Blasiholmen we find Professor Aberney's residence. In a large and commodious saloon

Aunt Sara was busy dusting the books in the two bookcases which were placed there. Our little, ever-active Sara was just as she had always been. Now, as usual, she wore a fine white cap with beautiful lace, a well-starched apron, spotless and smooth as if it had just been put on.

It is the same morning that Aberney called on Skuldfrid. He had but just left his abode, and Sara had launched out upon the wide sea of conjecture, where one can always be sure of suffering shipwreck. All the while that the brush and the duster did diligent service, Sara was thinking, —

“Something goes wrong with Tage.” Now she knocked the dust from a great thick budget of papers rather uninviting in appearance. “I just wonder what has flown into his head since last evening. When he came home from the opera he was perfectly wild. He walked the floor of his room the whole night through. Just as likely as not the boy has lost his heart. The youth, the youth!” The old bundle was now flung back in its place. “But have they not said that he was in love with that Countess who continually sends him invitations? Perhaps it was something that had reference to her. The queerest thing of all, however, was that Victor also appeared strange. The old fool can at least not be in love; but there is no telling, for though he ought to be a steady and sober man, he ran to hear that foreign singer. What was it that she was called? I must look in the newspaper and see.”

She now darted into Tage’s room, which lay to the right of the saloon; but she could not find the newspaper she sought. In place of it there was a sheet of paper all scribbled over with the word “singer.”

“There, what did I say? The boy has been bewitched by that travelling singer. I wonder if it was to call on her that he went out, dressed up so fine?

But where did Victor go, he who never leaves the house at this time of day? I am greatly astonished at it. Could anything unusual have happened, that is the cause of neither of them being like themselves? Could Tage possibly have — ”

Sara was here interrupted by a violent pull of the door-bell. Directly afterwards the door of the saloon flew open and Tage came in. Without seeming to notice Aunt Sara, he marched into his own room, slamming the door after him and bolting it.

“What in the world is the matter with the boy,” muttered Sara. “I have never in my life seen him this way; to go by me without a greeting, that is a little too much.” Sara now shook her duster through the open window.

The door-bell rang again. A few minutes afterwards a servant came in, saying, —

“Fru F—— wishes to see Mamsell.”

“Ask the lady to walk in,” was the answer.

The duster was hung on its hook near the chimney-place, her apron smoothed, and the bookcase closed, so that when Fru F—— entered there was no trace of Aunt Sara’s dusting mania, which always broke forth when Aberney was out of the way.

“Good day, my dear Sara,” uttered the worthy lady, an old acquaintance of Sara’s from the period of her first residence in Stockholm, and a perfect type of a Stockholm lady of the better class. “How do you do? I could not possibly refrain from coming here and informing myself of your health. You have not been to see us for so long.”

“You are very welcome, dear Lisa!” Sara courtesied politely and showed her guest into the parlor. “I have thought of you a great deal; but you know how hard it is for me to get out.”

The two ladies expatiated a little upon the difficulty of being one’s own master when there were gentlemen to attend to;

and when they had commented upon the servants and the market prices, the conversation was in full course, and they had the great field of their neighbors' affairs before them.

"Were you at the opera last evening?" asked Fru F——.

"No, my dear, you know I rarely go to such foolish places," answered Sara somewhat sharply. "At my age one can hit upon some better way of amusing one's self."

"But, my good friend, you know very well that the foreign singer appeared for the first time. I who am musical would have been inconsolable if I had not been able to see her."

"So; what is she called?"

"Mercy on me, have you not read in the papers about Madame Dorbino?"

"No, I never read anything but the advertisements."

"You cannot imagine how interesting it was to hear her. She has a very good voice and an agreeable appearance; but, my dear, she sings so frivolously, not at all like any other person, but she turns fiery red in the face one moment and the next so pale that it shows through the rouge. Besides, she gives her countenance an improper expression, just as if she wished to catch all the men by it; and this she does. They were perfectly crazy in applauding and calling her out. It was a real scandal. Your young relative the Lieutenant was there. He looked quite distracted when we met him in the corridor, I and my Adèle."

"Yes, I know that both Tage and Victor were there."

"So the Professor was there too. I did not see him; but I saw that rich Finn who was in the navy, Baron Canitz."

"He is not a Finn," rejoined Sara, tartly.

"Yes, my good friend, he most certainly is. I am perfectly assured of that matter. His father was shot in the last Finnish war. I know all about it."

"It seems to me that I ought to know it better," replied Sara, with rising heat.

"Let us not dispute. We have contended so much about that matter, that I think we had better leave it. I have forgotten what I wanted to say. O, Baron Canitz sat in the private box in the first tier, and I thought he would swallow the singer, by the way he looked at her. Yesterday afternoon Adèle happened to hear a sketch of her life through Mademoiselle A——, who had received it from Fru O——, whose husband is the leader of the orchestra, and he had heard it from Madame ——, our singer."

"As the person is a Frenchwoman, how did Mademoiselle A——, Fru O—— or Madame —— come to know anything about her?" inquired Sara, impatiently.

"Why you know, the reputation of *such* people, whether it be good or bad, goes before them. They say she has been separated from two men, besides having had some connection with a prince whom she abandoned for an English lord, and the latter again for a rich Frenchman, whom she left after she had ruined him. Now she is attached to a singer. She must be a perfect pattern of a coquette, and so intriguing that she captivates every man that comes in her way. My Adèle, who you know is an extremely modest girl, said that she was ashamed to look at her."

"Just for that reason I think it best not to visit such sinful places as the opera. I suppose you and Adèle will not go and hear her any more?"

"Gracious, how you talk, my dear Sara! Do you not know that Adèle is musical, and that she must consequently be seen at all the performances in which talent appears? It would not do to miss hearing Madame Dorbino, when one lives in society." Fru F—— always tried to give herself the air of belonging to the fashionable world. She continued: "We have secured seats for every performance in which she appears. To-day

Adèle bought her portrait, which is already to be found in all the bookstores. She is all the fashion, and so of course one must have her picture lying on the parlor table or hanging over the piano."

"A woman, of whom you know so much evil?"

"That is a thing by itself; we have the right to condemn her life and to be severe in that respect; but we must show appreciation of her talent, or else be considered destitute of judgment. For the rest, my dear, theatre people are theatre people; we do not make any great claims upon their morality, but admire them at a distance, without opening our houses to them, unless it should become a fashion among the leaders of the *ton*; then, we cannot avoid it."

"I tell you what, Lisa, I thank God that I do not live in the fashionable world. I have known all my life that people were miserable and wicked; but I have never before found them so bad as they now appear to me."

"The reason is that you have grown old and have not followed with the times. Now I must really go. Adieu, my dear Sara; remember me to the Professor and the Lieutenant. I hope they will do me the honor to come to my party on Saturday. I have your promise already."

After some further words which meant nothing, Fru F—— took her leave. Thanks to her statements, Aunt Sara had got her head full of disturbing fancies about the foreign singer, which she linked with the thought of Tage's strange behavior.

Towards dinner-time Aberney came home. His countenance had an unusually cheerful expression, and he greeted his aunt quite affably. At the sound of his voice Tage's door opened and the young Lieutenant hastened toward him, saying,—

"Do you come directly from her, father?"

Aberney smiled, and went without

replying into Tage's room. The latter followed, and Aunt Sara, to her inexpressible vexation, saw the door close after them. She felt her blood beginning to boil; she thought it abominable to be treated in that way by her nephew and Tage. They excluded her from all confidence, and that was more than she was able to bear. She started through the parlor at fearful speed and thence into her own room, closing the door after her with a loud bang, just as if she had hoped that this expression of her feelings would find its way to her nephew. We leave the old lady to give vent to her irritation all by herself, while we find out what took place between Aberney and Tage.

When they had closed the door after them, the former said,—

"My dear Tage, you have too little control over your feelings when you rush towards me with your questions, and that too in Aunt Sara's presence."

"Since yesterday I no longer know what I say or do. Only think what it was to see *her* on the stage, the object of all those looks, a recipient of all that homage; treated as a being whom people can either hiss or applaud, according to their pleasure; a plaything in the hands of the public. O my God! was it for this that I have loved her so faithfully? Who, who has changed the pure, innocent, and uncorrupted Skuldfrid into what she is?"

"Tage," interposed Aberney, "she is just as she has ever been, the same rich heart, the same innocent girl."

"Do you want me to believe that? No, she is an actress and nothing else. Why was I not allowed to go to her and express all the deep indignation that I feel, all the bitterness that fills my soul at the recollection of the dreadful deceit she has been guilty of?" Tage walked back and forth in the room.

"Who has she then deceived? In what does her deception consist?" asked Aberney.

"Why, father, think of her flight; think

of the years in which she has left us in ignorance of her fate. The care with which she concealed herself, the heartlessness with which she abandoned me. For whom did she do all this? For —”

“Foolish boy, do not utter an accusation which you know to be false. She is now as ever worthy of respect.”

“She! A singer, who like an adventurer has travelled around the world alone, without protection and without support.”

“Listen, Tage; if you intend to continue in that tone, it is useless for us to speak together. I lack all inclination to tell you what I have learned during the short time that I was with Skuldfrid.”

“You then believe what those lips say, that are so accustomed to lie! You believe in the sincerity of a voice which has for years studied the art of acquiring the proper expression!”

Aberney had seated himself on the sofa, with his arms crossed upon his breast. When Tage ceased, he said coldly, —

“I believe that the blood has so risen to your head that you do not know what you are saying or doing. I do not like to talk with fools, and therefore it is best for us not to speak any further upon this subject. Otherwise I would tell you a secret which I have hitherto kept to myself, namely, that Skuldfrid is my niece, that her name is Aberney, and that the discovery of this was the cause of her disappearance. Some one had told her that I was cruelly set against her mother, that I did not want to recognize either her or her daughter as my relatives; and that was the reason why she fled with the mother who had given her such a sad inheritance. Do not ask me why I had been so incensed against my brother's wife and child; I cannot tell you. This secret is buried with the erring woman. As to Skuldfrid, she stands so high above all others, that

every derogatory word about her is a piece of effrontery and will always fall back upon the one who uttered it. See her and speak with her; look into those eyes, and you will blush over every accusation against her; and now this is all. If you wish to see her, you are free to accompany me this afternoon; if not, then you are excused. One thing I tell you, do not appear with any fault-finding or reproaches, for I will not hear of it. When I say that Skuldfrid is a noble and elevated woman, then you may believe it.” Aberney rose, adding: “She has spoken with me about the past, but she begged of me that, after this had once been touched upon, she should be excused from returning to it. You ought therefore, if you decide to see her again, to spare her from all questions, unless she herself takes up the subject.”

Aberney left the room, and Tage threw himself on a sofa, a prey to all those disturbed feelings which create a chaos of good and evil within us.

At the dinner-table the Professor said to Sara, quite suddenly, —

“Well, I have a greeting for you from Enoch's daughter.”

Aunt Sara was engaged in carving the steak, according to all the rules of art. She dropped the carving knife and fork, and made such an impetuous motion that both she and the chair receded quite a distance from the table. Then she clasped her hands and stared at Aberney as if she did not believe her ears. Her consternation was so great, that it was several minutes before she could get a word over her lips. At length she murmured in an indistinct voice, —

“What in God's name do you say?”

“I said that I have met Enoch's daughter, and that I can greet you from her.”

“But — but —” stammered Sara, so agitated that she could not speak.

“Well, well, Aunt Sara, resume your carving, and I will in the mean time tell

you that we have a distinguished singer here and — ”

“Victor, do not play tricks with your old aunt ; you know — ”

“How kind you have been towards your nieces and nephews, that is true ; and I am not joking with you ; but, if you allow me, I will continue my story. That distinguished singer is — my niece.”

“Great God, what do you say ! That woman, who has had a dozen husbands and as many more lovers ; she who is such a thoroughly bad person. Ah ! this only was wanting in my sorrows, that I should find Enoch’s child as a lost creature.” Aunt Sara hid her face in her napkin and wept.

“Lost ! what are you talking about ?” said Aberney, with a frowning brow. “She is a great artist and an estimable woman. Who has dared to make you believe the contrary ?” Aberney’s glance flew over to Tage.

“They have not tried to make me believe anything,” sobbed Aunt Sara. “Fru F—— was here, and she told me the history of that singer. My God, little did I then imagine that it was about Enoch’s child. It is dreadful, it is terrible.”

“What is there dreadful in the fact of Enoch’s daughter being a distinguished singer, and her name celebrated all over Europe ? If Fru F—— is pleased to invent various stories about her, then you ought to have sense enough not to believe them, especially as you know how little reliance can be placed upon Fru F——’s accounts.”

“How can one help believing that which is indisputable ? That she is a theatre woman is one truth to begin with. That this is so will always remain your fault, for in your vindictiveness you would never hear the mother spoken of, and allowed her poor child to grow up at the mercy of circumstances. Besides, she cannot very well be a respectable woman, when she has been separated

from two or three husbands. One can see by this that the sins of the — ”

“You will please discontinue a sentence that is illy adapted to my niece,” interrupted Aberney sharply. “As to the three husbands, that is a fabrication to begin with. She was left a widow by the death of the only husband she ever had.”

“She has been married ! Skuldfrid married to another,” thought Tage.

“What has come over you, you who have never before inquired after either the mother or her, that you now — ”

“Have looked up the daughter,” interrupted Aberney. “Chance has brought us together. The mother is now dead, and the grave atones for all. To-morrow I will bring Enoch’s daughter here. Until then we will leave the subject, if you have no objection. But with the knowledge that you have of my character, you ought to understand that I would not acknowledge Enoch’s daughter as my niece, unless she was a respectable woman.”

Aunt Sara sighed. She was too much agitated to bring forward any objections or questions. Enoch, Edith, all that she had held dearest on earth, stood vividly before the old lady’s mind, and in the trouble of her heart it seemed to her very bitter to find Enoch’s child under such conditions.

After dinner Aberney had not said a word to Tage about the visit to Skuldfrid. As it approached five o’clock, the Professor took his hat to go out. Sara had shut herself up in her room. Everything appeared to her so strange, that she had entirely lost her usual self-possession. When Aberney came out into the saloon he found Tage there, attired with care and in complete visiting toilet.

“So you have decided to call on Skuldfrid ?” said the Professor, indifferently.

"Yes, with your permission," answered Tage, with an effort to appear calm.

A little while afterwards father and son entered the singer's abode. When the old French servant opened the door, it took Tage several seconds to gain sufficient command over himself to be able to follow Aberney into the saloon, where Skuldfrið came to meet them. Tage stopped at the door, unable to take a step towards her. He was at once agitated and surprised. Was this the celebrated singer whom he saw yesterday upon the stage? No, it was the same Skuldfrið he had played with as a boy and idolized as a youth; there was the same smiling look, beaming with joy, the same charming simplicity and unaffected grace.

After Skuldfrið in her fresh and ringing voice had given a hearty welcome to Aberney, she turned to Tage.

"How glad I am to see you again! Welcome Tage, and forgive me all the anxiety I occasioned when I disappeared so suddenly from my friends. Forget, if possible, the suffering this step caused you, and believe that I to-day give you my hand as a friend and sister. Skuldfrið has not for an instant ceased to be this to Tage."

The young Lieutenant's head whirled, and he stammered some incoherent words as he seized her hand and carried it to his lips.

Aberney looked at them. With the exception of the blush that suffused her cheeks when she first turned to Tage, Skuldfrið had remained calm. She received him with a friendliness as free from all emotion as if they had separated but yesterday and met again to-day. He, on the other hand was so confused, that one could easily determine the nature of the interest that still bound him to the friend of his youth, after an interval of six years.

"He loves her; but there is nothing in her that denotes that she loves him.

Poor Tage! the gift of her heart is not for you."

If Skuldfrið as a young girl had the power of cheering and enlivening, of driving away all dark thoughts and calling forth brightness, she now possessed this capacity in a far greater degree.

Her look and every word gave evidence of the sincere satisfaction she experienced in meeting these dear friends again. Now, as in her younger years, the joy she felt spread also to those around her. Tage's manner, which in the beginning had been somewhat constrained and perturbed, soon became free and unembarrassed. After an hour's stay with her it seemed to him as if the six years had been but a dream, so completely did he feel himself transported to the former joyous times.

They talked first about the past, and then Skuldfrið made various inquiries, first about Aunt Sara, and afterwards concerning Tage and his career in life. Tage spoke of the voyages he had made, and said finally with a peculiar sharpness in his voice, —

"I was with the expedition which the frigate *Carolina* made two years ago. *I was in Naples.*"

Skuldfrið started, and looked at Tage, exclaiming, —

"You!"

This subject recalled to Tage's soul all the angry and malicious thoughts he had had at the perusal of her letter to Lothard. His feelings were reflected on his face. Skuldfrið looked at him with an anxious and inquiring expression.

"Yes, I was at Naples with the *Carolina*," said Tage, not without a certain bitterness in his tone, "and I then heard Madame Dorbino spoken of; but little did I imagine that *she* and *you* were one and the same person."

"Then you had no idea that Skuldfrið was in Naples?"

Tage changed color, but replied immediately, —

"No, not the slightest!"

"Strange that I did not hear your name mentioned among the officers spoken of as being with the frigate," said Skuldfrið, thoughtfully.

"It may be that your attention was so exclusively engrossed with *one name*, that you paid no heed to mine." Tage's jealousy made him inconsiderate. He almost forgot Aberney's presence, and that he had not mentioned to him the circumstance at Naples, or his knowledge of Skuldfrið's being there. At this allusion to Skuldfrið's interest for Lothard, the young woman's demeanor assumed a stamp of dignity, and she replied almost coldly, —

"How do you know that there was any person on board the frigate whose name could make me forget my friends?"

"I only broached the question," Tage played with some sewing materials that lay on the table. "It appeared to me inexplicable that my comrade in his enumeration should forget me."

"Ah, then you knew that I spoke with one of your comrades."

"He told me that Madame Dorbino had asked him some questions," Tage threw a dark look on Skuldfrið. "I also heard that —" He held up.

"Why do you break off?" inquired the Professor, who had followed the conversation with intense interest, and now concluded, from Skuldfrið's paleness, that Tage had touched some subject upon which she was sensitive. Aberney's voice recalled him to his senses and enjoined him to take care of his words and his expression of countenance.

"I stopped," said he, with well-feigned carelessness, "because I did not wish to pronounce a name which must be disagreeable for Skuldfrið to hear."

"And what name could that be?"

"Tage probably means — Canitz," said Skuldfrið, in a singularly clear voice. Her dark eyes shone strangely when she fixed them on Tage.

"Ah!" was all the Professor answered; then followed a short pause which seemed especially painful. Aberney at first looked at Tage with an air as if he expected to hear him say something; but as he kept silent, the Professor said, —

"If Skuldfrið should really have any prejudice against that name, I believe it will entirely disappear when she learns that Lieutenant Canitz saved Tage's life upon the passage from Naples to Palermo."

"Has he saved Tage's life?" exclaimed Skuldfrið, with a beaming face.

"Yes, I have actually to thank him that I sit here this moment," answered Tage, with a bitter smile looking at Skuldfrið. "How that occurred, perhaps you will allow me to relate to you some other time. Now it would be much more agreeable to hear you talk."

"Yes, especially as Tage does not like to be reminded of that accident. I should most assuredly have remained in ignorance of it, had not one of Tage's comrades, Lieutenant Steen, related the occurrence," said Aberney.

"That sounds as if you wanted to assert that —"

"You are not grateful. Well, yes, that is the truth, at least as regards Canitz; but let us leave this." The Professor brought the conversation back to the past years, and Skuldfrið spoke sadly of the pilgrimage her thoughts had made continually to her two friends, and of her efforts to gain some intelligence of them whenever she met any Swedes. She mentioned that she had been informed through Pastor Arbonius in Finland how life shaped itself for Aberney and Tage; that she had received a letter from him every year, in which he let her know that her friends were in good health and that all went well with them.

"Then you have corresponded with Arbonius," fell in Tage, "and that although you left us in complete ignorance of your fate?"

"Tage, ask my friend," Skuldfrið reached Aberney her hand, "if he does not understand my course of action? I could not have lived without knowing something about those who were so dear to me," she added sorrowfully.

"But we, we must live without anything of the kind from you."

"Did we not agree that no reproaches concerning the past should be made?" said Aberney. "I understand Skuldfrið perfectly." He patted her on the head, and she seized the fatherly hand and kissed it just as she used to.

A short pause ensued. Skuldfrið was absorbed in melancholy thoughts. Tage looked at her. Aberney broke the silence, saying while his gaze rested on Skuldfrið, —

"Does it not surprise you to hear that Tage and Canitz have been on board of a Swedish man-of-war?"

Skuldfrið's neck, brow, and cheeks were suffused with a deep blush as she answered, —

"Yes, I confess that it surprised me when I was told that — that — Canitz was in the Swedish service."

Tage had grown pale when Aberney again mentioned this name, which sounded so repugnant to his ears. The Professor resumed, without appearing to observe the impression his words made, —

"It was indeed something very rare for a Russian subject to abandon a career so brilliant as the one that fell to Canitz in that country, to throw away a princely fortune, and all this to encounter an uncertain future in Sweden. He now serves in the navy, and has there shown himself to be a man of distinguished qualities, so that no one has any desire to reproach him for being the son of General Canitz."

Tage had got hold of the scissors and a spool of cotton. He clipped the thread with restless zeal all the while Aberney was speaking. His tightly compressed lips showed that he was trying

to restrain the expression of what he felt at Aberney's words. When the latter ceased, Tage said, however, in a suppressed voice, —

"What Canitz is or is not is hard to decide, for he has a cold, calculating, and reserved character, which inevitably inspires distrust. One has always reason to fear that the father's faults will show themselves at some time."

Skuldfrið had sat silent. When Aberney spoke of Canitz, her breast heaved with agitation. At Tage's words she turned her head quickly and rejoined with animation, —

"Tage, no person should be condemned for the faults that his parents committed. It is a cruel injustice; and besides, we see the wrong in the erring action, but we do not know what cruel sufferings, what terrible force of feeling, prompted the guilty deed; therefore, do not condemn. Ah! once I also thought as you do, and harshly upbraided the innocent for the transgressions of the guilty. I shall eternally repent it."

"Skuldfrið is right," said Aberney, rising. He laid his hand on Tage's shoulder, adding, "We none of us know how much guilt we have inherited."

Tage looked displeased. That hated and detested name should then always cause him some overthrow. It was as if this Canitz only existed to torment him. Now he was obliged, first to hear him praised by Aberney, then defended by Skuldfrið, and that on the very first day of their meeting. Skuldfrið, who, besides her clear mind, quick comprehension, and natural delicacy of feeling, had now considerable experience, perceived immediately the impression that the conversation had made upon Tage, and changed the theme. Although every fibre of her being trembled with the intense longing to hear something more about Lothard, she did not take up the broken thread.

"Can you dispose of your time this

evening?" asked the Professor, turning to Skuldf rid.

"Completely, I am to-day perfectly at leisure. My relative, Nathalie Renstein, has taken a trip to Drottningholm with some strangers, and she will not return before late in the evening."

"Ah, that is true, you told me this morning that you were related to the charming Countess." The Professor threw a mischievous glance at Tage, who at the mention of the Countess grew visibly embarrassed. "It is true that you reside in her house, which I had forgotten in the pleasure of seeing you again."

"Yes, Nathalie has shown me true friendship. After my decision to come to Sweden, she took upon herself every arrangement for my comfort. She has actually lavished kindness upon me since my arrival here."

"Ah; indeed," said Aberney. "The Countess is a dangerous woman, with a captivating appearance, unusual cultivation, and a great talent for conversation, but with a cold and calculating intellect. What kind of a heart she has I cannot say, Tage ought to be able to inform us about that; for you must know, my dear Skuldf rid, that the young gentleman has been completely fascinated by the beautiful Countess." Aberney looked at Skuldf rid when he said this, as if to see what effect his words would have.

"Your choice, dear Tage," said Skuldf rid, "gives evidence of good taste, and I am rejoiced that your fancy has fallen upon a woman so uncommon and richly endowed."

Tage threw an enraged glance at Aberney, and declared positively that he never had been and never could be captivated with the Countess, — an assurance that brought a melancholy expression to Skuldf rid's face.

"She desires that he should love another," thought Aberney. "All hope is thus extinguished for Tage."

"Have you been around any since

your arrival?" asked Aberney of Skuldf rid.

"No, dear Uncle; I had no desire to see anything of Sweden before I met you again. I felt, in spite of Nathalie's care, far more solitary here, where they speak my mother-tongue, than I have felt elsewhere."

"Very well, if you would like we will take a trip to Djurgården this evening," exclaimed Tage; "and if father allows me, I will go for a carriage." A moment afterwards Tage was on his way for this purpose.

When Aberney and Skuldf rid were left alone, the former said, —

"To-morrow you dine with us; is it not so?"

"Most certainly, if you will come for me when I am through with the rehearsal."

"O, no, I will not do that," said Aberney in jest, "and for the simple reason that I intend to conduct you there. At what time must you be there?"

"At ten o'clock. Ah, you dear, good Uncle, how calm and contented I feel at your side. You are and will ever remain my best friend."

"And is it not true, child, that you will nevermore leave me?" The Professor had taken her head between his hands and looked into her eyes. Skuldf rid smiled pensively.

"I do not know," she stammered. "Perhaps I shall remain, and perhaps some powerful feeling within me will force me to leave Sweden this very summer. I no longer obey my will, but something that is stronger. Ah! do not question me, let me yet a little while preserve my secret. One day, dear Uncle, I will confide it to you, and that day I shall be either the happiest or the most miserable being on earth. Until then I will forget the past and the future in the joy of having found you again."

The Professor kissed her in silence upon the brow. He already surmised

what she lacked courage to tell him ; but what neither he nor anybody else was able to divine was the plan Skuldfrið had proposed, the object she wished to win. The success or failure of this endeavor would decide her whole future.

All who have visited Djurgården on a beautiful May evening are well aware that the park is filled with people in carriages, on foot, and on horseback, who are by no means of the glad Sunday populace, but belong to that happy or unhappy class for whom the whole life is a single day of rest. They ride out to Djurgården because the season of *soirées* is ended ; they go there because it is the fashion. But if we contemplate these human flowers of the day that belong to the gay world, we see that ennui has placed itself quite impatiently beside them in the elegant carriages ; that their satiated minds and weary eyes have lost the power of rejoicing at the spring, the summer, or at life ; but what then ? They have liveried servants, fine equipages, superb horses, and exquisite toilets, all of which are for show, and therefore they go to Djurgården.

In one of these carriages which took its way through Blå Porten and towards the plain sat a young and beautiful woman whose whole appearance denoted that she at least was not rated with folly, that she had not yet lost the power of enjoying the beauty or delights of nature. With an eager gaze, full of interest, her eyes flew from object to object, and contemplated with true admiration the charming picture that Djurgården presents. The carriage in which she and her companions were seated took the road across the plain to the so-called Frisens Park, which was not then unenclosed as now, but surrounded by a railing. They alighted from the carriage and proceeded on foot through the park.

In silence but with an expression of undisguised admiration, the young woman, supported on the arm of her elder companion, walked down to the sea-shore, where they stopped.

Have you ever stood there, my dear reader, and surveyed in silence the peculiarly beautiful scene you had before you, while the broad oaks that had stood there a hundred years shook their leafy crowns above your head ? If you have, then you have also felt proud of Sweden's beautiful scenery. To the right you behold the city of Birger,* embraced by the waters of Saltsjön and Mälaren ; a magnificent jewel set in the silver arms of the sea and surrounded by its many isles. Directly before you the lofty mountain of the south country raises its august front, — a symbol of the people who have grown up among the hills of the North ; and at your feet roll the billows of the Saltsjön. A landscape so gorgeous in its exuberant beauty lies spread all about you that you exclaim irresistibly, "O Sweden, how beautiful thou art !"

"Well, Skuldfrið !" said Aberney at length, after a long silence, "what do you think of our Djurgården ?"

She laid her hand on her heart as she answered with one of her most beaming smiles, —

"My heart is too full for me to tell you what I think. It seems to me that only Finland could make me forget this country. Were I not Finnish, I would like to be a Swede, in order to say, Here I was born."

"And so you are, my child. Sweden is your birthplace, and your father sleeps beneath Swedish soil."

At these words Skuldfrið started and pressed Aberney's arm convulsively, as if she had experienced severe pain. Tage made some remarks about the situation of Stockholm, etc. They returned to the carriage, Skuldfrið walking

* Stockholm was founded by Birger.

with lingering steps as if to inhale in full draughts the air that seemed to her so delightful.

"If this place has already charmed you, how much greater will be the charm when these oaks are clothed in their luxuriant foliage," said Tage, as he helped her into the carriage.

They drove past Listonhill, Manilla, and the road to Rosendale. When they had taken a promenade around Carl John the Fourteenth's favorite summer residence, where the air was filled with the fragrance of flowers, they returned home by the beautiful Rosendale's road out to Brunnsviken.

The first deep impression that fine scenery makes upon the soul had been succeeded in Skuldfrið by that gladness and exhilaration which is always called forth by the beautiful. She clothed her impressions in words; and when she gave utterance to her delight in the most unrestrained enthusiasm, it was difficult to believe that this charming and unaffected manner belonged to a distinguished actress. Tage also remarked, —

"It is really necessary to look upon your magnificent attire not to forget that you are Madame Dorbino."

"What is there in my dress that reminds of the singer?" asked Skuldfrið.

"Its richness, its extreme elegance," said Tage, with a sigh. "The simple-minded Skuldfrið has become a brilliant lady."

"That is true; but this silk and velvet cover a heart which is as unalterably the same as when I wore the home-made clothes. Therefore, dear Tage, let us not forget the beauty around us for any bits of costly dry-goods."

Skuldfrið now smiled so cordially, that she again charmed away the shadows which tried to steal in and obscure the joy of the present moment. Aberney, like Skuldfrið, felt too deeply all that appealed to his sense of the beautiful to

let anything else affect him. His attention was so absorbed in Skuldfrið's expression of her feelings, that he had not observed her toilet before Tage spoke of it, but even then it was to him a matter of secondary importance. Just as they had driven down the hill which led from Rosendale, they met an elegant barouche, in which two ladies were sitting. At the side of the carriage, upon a remarkably beautiful white horse, rode a young man. He was engaged in a lively conversation with one of the ladies. They were driving slowly. Skuldfrið had been so engrossed in the contemplation of Brunnsviken, that she had not noticed the parties approaching until the moment of meeting. As the carriages passed each other, the gentleman on horseback came between them, and at that moment Skuldfrið's eyes fell upon him. She sat leaning forward, but threw herself back involuntarily against the seat. The fresh and blooming cheeks became white, and the dark eyes gazed at the rider, whose cold, severe look rested upon her. He saluted Aberney and Tage, and then passed on.

"Canitz!" muttered Tage, and looked at Skuldfrið. Not a glimpse of joy was left. The demon of jealousy instantly whispered to him counsels which the heart and reason would have rejected in a calmer mood.

When one is jealous or governed by envy, he is neither wise nor good. Tage said, —

"One never sees Countess X—— without Canitz being her attendant. He must certainly intend to unite his destiny to hers. It would be a brilliant alliance."

Skuldfrið grew still paler.

"She is exceedingly beautiful," continued Tage. "Did you observe the ladies in the barouche?" inquired he of Skuldfrið.

"No," was the answer.

Aberney had observed Skuldfrið's

changed appearance as well as Tage's intention to torment her. In the most indifferent tone in the world he said, —

"I believe you are entirely mistaken in supposing that Canitz intends to marry. And besides, that matter does not concern us. Is not the scenery here singularly varied?" asked he, turning to Skuldfrið. "There at Rosendale everything is so smiling and full of flowers; and here again we find a chain of hills clothed with trees, and resembling a wall which separates this road from the rest of Djurgården."

Skuldfrið turned her pale face to Abnerney and responded to his question in an absent tone. Still she was forced to resume the thread of conversation. She did it with that fine tact which marks good breeding. It is true her hearty laughter was heard no more, neither were her features lighted by any beaming smile; for the sun of joy had enveloped itself in a veil of melancholy, which hindered its rays from breaking forth; but it was yet bright and full daylight above it. Her free, open, and true artist soul, which lived and had its being only in the ideal, could not clothe its grief and sorrow in a complete vestment, but lent to it something of the rosy hue that surrounded everything to which her soul clung.

Tage again, a child of reality, with the ordinary weaknesses of humanity, although endowed with many good qualities, had the very common fault of letting his feelings appear in his face when he was out of humor. He now sat quite sullen and silent, without taking any part in the conversation.

Thus ended the first jaunt. In the evening, after Skuldfrið had got home and the Aberneys had left her, the French maid entered her room holding in her hand a bouquet of myrtle and orange blossoms.

"A servant just now left this at the door," said she, "with the direction that

I should bring it to Madame immediately."

Skuldfrið cast an indifferent glance at the singular bouquet and said, —

"Put it among the others that I have received during the day."

Anaise went to a large flower-stand that stood before the middle window of the saloon, and was about to place the nosegay among a quantity of magnificent and costly bouquets which had been sent to Madame Dorbino since the morning.

"Madame has to-day received over twenty bouquets," said Anaise, "but this is the only one that has not been accompanied by a billet. It must certainly be an Englishman that has sent you this, for no sensible and sane man would send you only myrtle and orange. Besides, it is tied with a broad black ribbon. The very paper that is around it is black."

"Let me see," said Skuldfrið, who, although engrossed by other thoughts, still felt a peculiar interest for the strange present. She examined it carefully. A finely stamped black silk paper was wrapped round it, and the stems of myrtle and snow-white orange blossoms were tied with a black ribbon. If there was any meaning in this gift, it could only signify sorrow and love.

"If it could be from him," thought Skuldfrið. "What other would — Folly! Anaise, put it away among the rest." Skuldfrið intended to leave the room, but Anaise checked her with the question, —

"Will Madame not read this quantity of billets that have arrived to-day?"

"No, burn them up."

The following day was the rehearsal of "Robert." All the artists, both lyric and dramatic, were now assembled to take Madame Dorbino in closer examination, and if possible find a multitude of faults in her. Besides, they wanted to hear a voice that had had the power to warm

even English blood, so that Britain itself had been entranced with it. The most beautiful ornament of the Swedish stage, Mademoiselle H——, was also present, and declared with her charming smile that Madame Dorbino was so beautiful that all felt themselves thrown into the shade by her. In another group they were engaged in praising the distinguished singer enthusiastically, and in a third they left no efforts unspared to hit upon something really infamous to say about her. A fourth group repeated everything good and bad that they had heard, without pronouncing any independent judgment. These were those who willingly reiterate what others say, but are afraid to hazard any opinion of their own.

Within this little world called the theatre we find precisely the same elements as in ordinary life ; and I dare say it is in its judgment of others neither better nor worse than the so-called higher society.

A few minutes before the rehearsal Skuldfriid arrived, but this time attended by Professor Aberney, who supported her upon his arm.

Aberney was one whom everybody knew, and whose name was mentioned with respect even by the most illiterate. There were consequently none in the theatre who were not aware of the Professor's standing. He had made himself known as a favorite composer, a fact that had weight with the lyric artists ; therefore his appearance with Skuldfriid awakened a certain attention. The curious instantly arrived at new conclusions, and while the overture was being played they had found out the whole connection of affairs. Professor Aberney was nothing more or less than one of her husbands, possibly that composer who had shot himself. When the rehearsal was over they had the story ready.

From the rehearsal Aberney took Skuldfriid to his home. At Gustaf

Adolf's Square they met Tage. His appearance now denoted a more cheerful state of mind than on the previous afternoon.

When they stood before the Professor's door and he was about to ring, Skuldfriid asked, —

"Does Aunt Sara know that *Skuldfriid* is her nephew's child?"

"No." The bell was now rung. The door opened and the next moment Skuldfriid stood before Sara, who at this sight came near fainting. Then followed exclamations, tears, embraces, explanations, etc. When all this was at last done away with, and Aunt Sara had got her cap in order and smoothed her apron, they sat down to the dinner-table. Sara had entirely forgotten the terrible fact that her dear Enoch's daughter, her darling Skuldfriid, was an opera singer, so glad was she to see her again. Aberney, Skuldfriid, and Tage did all in their power to preserve the cheerful conditions. Time flies fast when joy visits our souls. At seven o'clock Skuldfriid was obliged to leave her friends. At this breaking up Sara remembered the sad side of Skuldfriid's position in life. Some sharp words slipped over the old lady's lips, but Aberney interrupted them immediately.

Tage, who heard that Skuldfriid had promised Countess Renstein to spend the evening with her, as she had invited company for Madame Dorbino's sake, became in a bad humor directly, and added some bitter remarks to what Sara had said. Skuldfriid did not reply to Aunt Sara's attack, but to Tage she said earnestly, —

"Tage, beware of showing injustice towards a friend ; for it becomes sooner or later the death of friendship."

Aberney was the only one who did not make any reproaches. He was always the same. This day also Tage and Skuldfriid separated with unpleasant feelings.

After Skuldfriid had driven away from

Aberney's home, Tage took his hat to go out and get the fresh air while he at the same time calmed his disturbed mind.

"You are also invited to the Countess's reception this evening; are you not going there?" asked the Professor.

"I do not believe I can stand it to stay there the whole evening," answered Tage. "Are you going, father?"

"Of course; as Skuldfrið is to appear among that aristocratic set, she ought to have her uncle at her side."

Tage made no reply, but left the room.

"She must abandon theatrical life," thought he as he turned his steps towards Norrbro, "or I cannot answer for the consequences. O, how deeply, how madly I love her! How faithfully has my heart been bound to this attachment! She owes me a recompense for all my love, for all that I have suffered through her, and she shall not remain on the stage." Tage entirely forgot when he praised his faithfulness that it had been exceedingly fluctuating in its nature.

Aunt Sara thought as she went into her room, —

"Skuldfrið must leave the theatre. Enoch's daughter shall not be an actress, should I be obliged to tear down heaven and earth to get her away from there."

Aberney had gone to dress himself. He thought, while he was tying his cravat, —

"Skuldfrið must not remain on the stage; she must not spend her life surrounded by crazy admirers, whose flattery will sooner or later destroy her, or beset by an unscrupulous envy that will soil her reputation. She cannot remain there; but she must quit the stage of her own free will, not through any persuasion."

While Skuldfrið was attiring herself for Countess Renstein's reception, she thought, —

"Artist or woman? Am I to devote

my future to the theatre or the home? Perhaps this very evening will decide. Nathalie has told me that — *he* is coming."

She fastened a dark red flower as a breastknot upon the black dress which fell in rich folds around her. Her hair was without ornaments; she displayed the greatest simplicity in her dress. She was beautiful, so beautiful that she could have been sure of her victory beforehand, if her design had been to captivate. Yet the fresh color of her cheeks was veiled this evening by a slight paleness.

It was half past eight when Skuldfrið went down stairs and into the Countess's reception-room. She almost gave a cry of surprise when she found Aberney there waiting for her.

"Why, Uncle!" she exclaimed. "You here!"

"I am invited by the Countess to meet Madame Dorbino," said he, smiling, "and I have presented myself to escort the distinguished singer, who must not be allowed to appear without her natural protector."

Skuldfrið smiled at him very gratefully as she took his arm.

Countess Renstein, with whom we have previously become acquainted, was one of those women who are rightly called dangerous and irresistible. It is impossible to say wherein their power lies, but it is equally impossible to escape them. She was far from handsome, could scarcely upon a closer examination be called good looking, and yet she was spoken of for her beauty. Her features were irregular, and only the flashing and intelligent eyes could account for her being called the beautiful Countess Renstein. Her eyes were rather small than large; but they had an expression which captivated magically, and made it impossible for one to forget them or to weary of looking

into their depths. They made one forget that the nose was too small and that the mouth was not beautiful. Her hair was unusually abundant and of a light chestnut brown, assuming at times a reddish tinge when seen in a certain light, which gave it the appearance of being sprinkled with gold dust; it was also wavy, so that it resembled a light cloud. The Countess was tall, lively, gifted, proud, and thoughtless, changeable and imperious, wilful and coquettish. Always variable, always new, never the same. One moment gentle as a dove, the next passionate and capricious as a tyrant. One day rapt and absorbed, abandoning herself to romantic dreams, the next laughing at idealism and worshipping folly. She displayed an unheard-of perseverance when a conquest was to be made, either of a man or woman, who did not appear willing to render her the homage she was accustomed to receive; but the moment she had conquered the reluctant subject she lost all interest for the one she had made so much effort to win.

Although no actual resemblance existed between her and Skuldfrid, there was still a certain something in the Countess that reminded one of her, as we have already indicated. One never saw one without thinking of the other. The vivacity, the grace of movement, were the same in both, so also the undisguised frankness, which surprised through the *naïveté* with which they told people the truth. With Skuldfrid this was a consequence of nature and education; with the Countess Nathalie it was the result of study. She had too much ability to be a coquette of the usual order. She did not attempt to captivate with bare shoulders, a small waist, languishing glances, charming smiles, nor the fashionable style of her dress. Nathalie employed neither rouge nor padding, jewelry nor flowers, to enhance her charms: she had chosen quite other means.

"The silly may busy themselves with

that nonsense, which after all will not hinder them from being tedious and growing old," thought Nathalie. She determined to be original, and that in a way that would make her the most courted of all attractive women. She knew perfectly well when, as a young girl, she entered society, that she was not especially beautiful. Her parents had left her a comfortable, but by no means large, fortune. It was not sufficient to attract lovers or admirers, although it was fully equal to her needs and caprices. The first year of her entrance into society she spent in studying the ladies of style, while she held herself in the background. The next she went to Paris, where she remained two years, and after this period she married Count Renstein. The Count was sickly and took a journey to Italy and to Egypt for the benefit of his health; it was on this journey that we made the acquaintance of Nathalie, who returned from the land of mystery and the black art as a wealthy widow. The Count had willed her all his property. She had now been for two years the meteor around which gathered the fashionables of the day, the star which was not eclipsed by any other, the object which envy regarded with suppressed indignation.

Rich, independent, and passionately fond of distinguished society, her house became a gathering-place for genius, art, and learning. In her saloon, surrounded by a flock of adorers, Nathalie had never yet experienced love or known what jealousy meant. She liked to have the most beautiful women around her, the most dangerous rivals to the power upon which she set so high a value, for the triumph of preserving her supremacy became so much the greater. What she possessed of actual good or evil would be difficult to determine; she resembled a fine artificial flower which borrowed everything, even to its fragrance, from the natural, but still lacked the essential *life*. That

is to say, her heart had not yet awakened to any other interest than the triumphs her vanity reaped. Her life was like a foaming beverage, but she had no idea of what was hidden at the bottom of the cup.

There was no name of distinction in the world of art, literature, learning, or music, that the charming widow did not try to get upon the list of her associates. She was ambitious of placing the aristocracy of genius before that of birth, and amused herself in making the sharpest sallies against nobility's "decayed ances-try and ragged banners."

On the evening in question a large assemblage thronged her saloon, the majority, however, belonging to the noble classes; and besides these some noted artists, savans, thinkers, and authors. Berzelius was there seen in conversation with Count Woyna, the Finnish artist, Ekman chatting with the beautiful Countess F—. The atheist A—g—t talked theology with Professor F—, and the French Minister, Count M—, discussed politics with Count C. H. A—, etc., etc.

The hostess was in the midst of this assemblage, reclining negligently on a sofa and talking with a young man who leaned against the back of it. In this circle of ladies, covered with silks, laces, velvet, and precious stones, she was the simplest. She wore a light blue dress of some thin material. Her coiffure differed entirely from the rest, being in a style between a man's and a woman's. Skuld-frid had not yet appeared.

"I assure you, Baron," said Nathalie, "that I intend to give you all a great surprise, and myself a triumph; try to guess whom I am expecting. It was my wish to enjoy your astonishment that prompted me to exact the promise that you would come."

"You are too good, Countess, to attach so much importance to my humble self," answered the young man with a smile at once cold and ironical.

"You are mistaken, Baron Canitz, if you think that I have any interest in *you*. No, not at all; I intend to divert myself in proving to you that you have spoken an untruth."

"Allow me to doubt if that pleasure will be conferred upon you. I never speak an untruth."

"Indeed; then I know more than you. Apropos, how long do you intend to continue to pay court to me?" Nathalie laughed. "Admit that it has not brought you a step nearer your aim."

"I concede it, therefore I will not importune you hereafter. I shall not present myself oftener than I am called for."

"Truly! And yet you once said that—" Nathalie looked at him with a mischievous expression.

"That I should be your chevalier until you told me what I wished to know."

"Precisely. You then desist from your purpose of sounding me?"

"Yes."

"How shall I understand this? You are not one to be deterred by difficulties. Can it be that you —"

"Know where the person is on whose account I have plagued you? Yes, Countess." Lothard looked at her with a cold glance. "Do you know where she lives?" added he.

"Yes, I do." Nathalie looked annoyed.

"In that case," Lothard smiled, "I congratulate myself upon knowing still more than you. I greatly fear that you have amused yourself in feigning a knowledge that you did not possess."

"Leave this, I beg of you; I am too impatient at present to occupy myself with anything but seeing you abandon the part you are playing, and in this respect at least I am not mistaken."

"Mistaken, what do you mean?"

"That your indifference is not real, but only an assumed manner with which you wish to attract attention."

Canitz bowed.

"If that is so, then you must admit that I have one merit, that of never forgetting my part."

"O yes, but you have, though —"

"I defy you to prove that assertion."

"Do you wish me to do it?"

"I should be very much obliged to you, Countess."

"Very well, do you remember when I met you at the entrance of the opera-house the first time Madame Dorbino appeared, how agitated and disturbed you looked? You were so out of balance that you nearly forgot to salute me."

"Yes, I remember it all," replied Lothard with unaltered composure; "but it was a consequence of the excessive heat. I did not feel well."

"Madame Dorbino and Professor Aberney," announced the usher.

Lothard actually started. The Countess forgot to observe him, so surprised was she to see Skuldfrið leaning on the arm of the Professor. She had known nothing of their relationship or acquaintance. She had invited Aberney to meet Madame Dorbino, in order to afford him the pleasure of her acquaintance.

"Always polite to celebrities," said the Countess to the Professor when he saluted her.

"This time, Countess Renstein, it is not only courtesy, but a duty that I fulfil. Madame Dorbino is a relative of mine."

At the announcement of her name all eyes were directed towards the singer. After the Countess had in some courteous words expressed her agreeable surprise at finding Skuldfrið related to such a man as Aberney, she suddenly remembered Lothard, and that she had not observed what effect Skuldfrið's appearance had upon him. She turned with a quick motion of the head; but lo and behold, the Baron had disappeared; her eyes sought him in vain. She could not discover him in the saloon.

In a few minutes Skuldfrið was sur-

rounded by persons, who complimented her upon her appearance in *Freyschütz*. They pressed around the distinguished singer to offer her their homage, and to convince themselves upon a nearer view if she was as beautiful, engaging, and fascinating off the stage as she was upon it. For the first time Nathalie saw herself deserted by her admirers. They had all hastened to pay tribute to the new-comer.

Nathalie was however for the moment engrossed by other thoughts than her desire of pleasing. She understood those who drew her car of triumph too well not to know that she had but to enter their midst, making some of her irresistible sallies or witty remarks, to have them all enrolled again under her banner.

While Skuldfrið was being waited upon with flattery and the Professor with questions, the Countess passed through the two adjoining apartments, but without finding Canitz. Finally she came to a little cabinet, where she saw him standing by the window. His back was turned to the Countess. She hurried towards him, saying, —

"What, Herr Baron, are you so frightened at the sound of Madame Dorbino's name, that you take flight?"

Lothard turned. Nathalie fancied that he was paler than usual and that the cold, proud expression had disappeared. There was a trace of melancholy and bitter grief in his countenance which struck Nathalie in a wonderful manner, child of folly as she was. This man, who always showed such a cold politeness, who towards her especially displayed such a sarcastic irony, in whose glance she could not discover a shadow of feeling, who had irritated and tormented her with his reserve, whom she had regarded as a frigid egotist, he then had a heart that could experience sorrow and pain. So there was some warmth behind the cold mask.

Nathalie never thought him so hand-

some before. This face, now freed from its mocking smile and its stern earnestness, seemed to her beautiful. She thought, —

"How these eyes would glow if his soul was filled with love!"

Canitz, who had no idea of the impression his sorrowful aspect made upon Nathalie, answered with a melancholy smile, —

"Countess, nothing frightens me, but I sometimes like to keep company with myself."

"With what a tone you say that!" Countess Nathalie forgot to jest.

Lothard passed his hand over his brow as he resumed his usual voice and cold demeanor.

"What is there in my tone that surprises you? Do not think so ill of me as that I seek solitude to abandon myself like a sighing Werther to sickly reveries. No, I can assure you that when this occurs it is because I am tired of the bustle around me. But you promised me a surprise; I have not yet been surprised by anything that I have heard or seen."

"Have you not? And yet you heard who was announced." The Countess looked at him.

In a few minutes a complete revolution had occurred within her. Incomprehensible enigma, called the human heart! It is highly probable that Nathalie could have associated with Canitz her whole life through, without feeling for him any other interest than that for a person who amused or vexed her. Hitherto she had only thought of Lothard when she saw him, forgetting at other times that he existed. Now the bronze figure had revealed a glimpse of something that resembled feeling. There was then a heart in that breast. Why should she not be able to captivate it? This impervious mortal, against whom she could hurl her wit, or attack at pleasure, now became a being that she wished to know, a character that she was

eager to fathom. Lothard had found in this engaging woman an enemy to his peace. It was now too late for him to put on the mask of indifference. She had once for all discovered that it was a *mask*, and cost what it would she must have it away. But to return to their conversation.

"Of whom do you speak, Countess?" asked Lothard, with such an appearance of ignorance that the Countess was duped by it.

"Ah, sir, I truly do not know what to think of your absent-mindedness."

"Whatever you please, Countess, if you will only inform me why I should abandon my role."

"Well, Madame Dorbino is here."

"I expected to meet her at your house this evening."

"Ah, indeed. Now give me your arm and I will present you to her and at the same time make my observations."

"Present me!" Lothard, with all the power of his will, could not hinder the blood from rushing to his head. He felt that the Countess's eyes were fastened upon him, and he would have given much to have had as good command over his blood as over his muscles.

"It seems that my proposition disturbs you? You cannot know Madame Dorbino?"

"No, Countess, I do not know the singer Madame Dorbino," answered Lothard, coldly.

"Your arm." The Countess took Lothard's arm and they proceeded through the smaller rooms. During the short transit Lothard tried to subdue every emotion. He jested with Nathalie. The sharpest observer could not have discerned any remnant of agitation in this cold and proud face. When he at length stood beside Skuldfrid's chair he looked like a piece of granite. The young woman was engaged in a lively conversation with Madame St. G——, and her head was turned in the direction opposite to

that in which Lothard and Nathalie came.

"Allow me, my dear Frida," said the Countess to Skuldfrið, "to present to you Baron Canitz."

At Nathalie's first word Skuldfrið had turned round. Before her stood Lothard, pale, cold, and proud. He played his role surpassingly well, but the distinguished actress, who had had as many plaudits, bouquets, and laurel wreaths showered upon her for her transcendent acting as for her singing, now changed color so rapidly and showed so much perturbation when she responded to Baron Canitz's polite, almost reverent bow, that it was obvious to all. She did not by any means confirm the assertion that an actress, in studying other characters, seals up her own feelings and loses the power of experiencing any deep and serious impression.

The Countess thought, —

"Frida knows him, but she plays her part very poorly in not concealing her emotion. Yet that signifies nothing; she is beautiful even now. O, how that man provokes me; see, how calm he is, and yet I could venture my life that he also knows her; I saw that when I proposed to introduce him. I must find out the secret."

Nathalie left Skuldfrið. Lothard took a vacant chair at her side, which a young man had left when the Baron was presented. It was impossible for Skuldfrið to get a word over her lips, although she knew all eyes were turned upon her. Lothard, on the contrary, realized fully that no attention should be attracted to their meeting; he therefore said in French, with a calm voice, although there was something unnatural in the accent, —

"How does Sweden please you, Madame? I understand that you visit this country for the first time? It ought consequently to possess the charm of novelty."

Lothard's glance rested upon the beau-

tiful woman, clear and brilliant. As long as her face betrayed a sign of inner emotion, Lothard continued to speak of the Swedish people, its culture, etc., etc. Once only had she dared to lift her eyes to his face, but lowered them immediately. After speaking yet awhile upon indifferent subjects, he rose, uttered some words of courtesy, but so low that they could not be caught by the bystanders, and then left her. An hour after this Skuldfrið whispered to Aberney, —

"Dear Uncle, take me away from here. I cannot endure it any longer."

"And I no longer doubt," thought the Professor. "I now know all. Poor children, it seems that no happiness will grow from the graves of your guilty parents."

When Skuldfrið reached home, Anaise again handed her a bouquet of myrtle and orange blossoms, tied with a black ribbon and surrounded with a black paper.

Skuldfrið did not put it among the other flowers. Why? She did not know herself, but the strange gift interested her.

In "Robert," Skuldfrið appeared for the second time as Alice. Now also she met the beam of a pair of dark eyes from the lower private box; again his hands remained motionless as before; and although the whole house resounded with acclamations and applause, although the stage was covered with flowers, *he*, for whom she sang especially, remained impassable. What cared Skuldfrið for the applause of all the others? A single look, a single gesture of satisfaction, on his part would have been more to her than the admiration of the world.

When she drove home that evening from the theatre, she felt sad in the very depths of her heart. The only time fate brought them together he had not indicated by a word that he re-

membered *Skuldfrid*. Was not this the strongest confirmation of what his conduct in Naples had given her to understand? *Skuldfrid* was miserable, and a host of depressing and hopeless feelings took possession of her mind.

That evening no bouquet of myrtle and orange blossoms was handed to her, but a wreath of cypress and laurel. *Sorrow and fame.*

The morning after her appearance in "Robert" she was besieged by persons who were not received, by billets that were not read, and bouquets which Anaise took charge of. After Nathalie's reception invitations poured in upon the beautiful singer, who was related to the Countess and the celebrated Professor Aberney. She was then of good family, and this heightened her value considerably in the goodly city of Stockholm. With us Swedes family connections are very important. In short, *Skuldfrid* was courted and eulogized; everything contributed to spoil her, especially as envy itself could find nothing to say against her manner of life. To be sure, many reports were circulated to the effect that she had been married, and that she had had strange adventures, etc.; but Professor Aberney's appearance as her natural protector and near relative made people utter such things quite low among themselves.

The ladies thought there was an almost shocking warmth in the manner in which *Skuldfrid* sung. Yes, there was undoubtedly in that transport, ardor, and inspiration something wanton, unwomanly, and unbecoming, etc.; but as London and Paris had been charmed with it, it was quite as well to overlook what one did not understand. Besides, there was in *Skuldfrid*'s performance such a stamp of truth, that censure itself was forced to silence.

A week elapsed. *Skuldfrid* had declined all invitations and devoted her leisure hours to the society of Aberney or Nathalie. Tage became more and

more smitten every day, and avoided the Countess. No meeting with her had as yet taken place in *Skuldfrid*'s presence. But in the same measure that his inclination for *Skuldfrid* became more conspicuous, she grew more retiring, which only increased Tage's feeling instead of quenching it. He sometimes became quite bitter and inveighed sharply against *Skuldfrid*'s choice of vocation. She retained her coolness under these attacks; sometimes replying in few words, or again hearing him without giving any answer. Aunt Sara also treated her to long sermons over the sinfulness of her life. If it then happened that the old lady and *Skuldfrid* were alone together, the sermons were accompanied with tears and supplications that she would not continue upon this road of destruction. There was often in Aunt Sara's simple words, full of prejudice as they were, such a stamp of sincere conviction, that *Skuldfrid* listened to her without feeling offended or interrupting her with a haughty mien and decided tone; but yet Sara perceived very soon that she did not accomplish anything with all her discourse. Some other means must be employed. What remained to be done? Yes, scandal should be made to serve; *Skuldfrid* must know what people said about her. She should be snatched from the illusion that she enjoyed any esteem. That aristocratic people invited her did not by any means prove that honest people respected her. Aunt Sara had besides the full conviction that there was no smoke without fire; ergo, *Skuldfrid* must in some way have given occasion to all this talk. Aunt Sara had in fresh remembrance that *Skuldfrid* even as a young girl gave indication of very free ideas. Had she not taken walks with that young fellow? Sara did not yet know positively whether it was Canitz or some one else. Those rambles were, according to Sara's opinion, plain proofs of a frivolous nature. There-

fore she was going to avail herself of the first opportunity to talk reason to Enoch's child. It was her duty to save the erring one.

Singularly enough, Aberney remained quite neutral; and yet Aunt Sara could not possibly have a greater aversion to Skuldfrið's being a singer than he. His reasons for this repugnance were very different, however, from the old lady's. He did not see in it a road to perdition, but a career in which Skuldfrið must sooner or later encounter two evils: First, to fall a victim to the machinations of those whose aim was to sully her name. The same report, which with swift wings had made her known as an artist, would eagerly snatch the first scandal that could in a piquant manner cast a shadow over her who had just been eulogized. Aberney understood the world and knew that hungry newspapers gladly insert anything that can interest, making themselves too often the heralds of scandal. He knew also that every kind of publicity is hazardous, especially for a woman, whose honor is so easily assailed. In the second place, Aberney could not possibly understand or rightly judge the dramatic art. He saw in it artifice and deception. He could not comprehend that there is a quality in the soul that resembles an echo, which gives a response to the thought of the poet and the creation of the composer.

The *true dramatic artist* is like an instrument. His soul has a response for the beautiful as well as the ugly, the great as well as the small, the ridiculous and the sublime, in the author's conception. He does not possess the power of drawing these images which spring up in the fancy, but he is able to comprehend and give them life. The learned man understood nothing of all this. He looked upon the drama as merely the art of impersonation acquired with much effort and study, or a highly cultivated talent for simulating thoughts, feelings,

and character utterly foreign to the one who represents them. If this were so, the consequence would be the extinction of everything true and noble in the effort to act well.

Had Skuldfrið merely sung, had she even sung with fervor and spirit, but without the dramatic action, the danger would have been less. At it was, this idolatry of the moment, these storms of applause, this ephemeral glory of renown, would some time or other plunge her into that dangerous intoxication which so easily passes over to self-worship. No, she must be snatched from all these perils. And yet Aberney remained passive. He only redoubled his tenderness and his consideration for her welfare. He never wounded her with any attacks. He knew that the first condition in getting a person to follow advice is to gain confidence and control through the power of affection.

Tage, on his part, had, after Skuldfrið's fourth appearance, resolved to bring things to a focus by a declaration.

Thus a storming was intended both by Aunt Sara and Tage. Aberney again relied upon attaining his object through the power of influence.

While all this was in preparation, Skuldfrið had not visited any one but her relatives. Nathalie bestowed an enthusiastic admiration upon her, which bore the resemblance of true affection. It was very evident that she wanted to gain Skuldfrið's confidence. Nathalie was with her daily, and, despite all objections on Skuldfrið's part, she was obliged to accompany the charming Countess in her trips to Djurgården, Haga, and Carlberg. Upon all such occasions they saw Lothard, who generally met them somewhere on horseback, and then rode awhile at the side of the carriage, conversing with the Countess, after he had saluted Skuldfrið respectfully but coldly. It occasionally happened that Skuldfrið mingled in these short conversations with

a word or two, but generally she avoided saying anything in Lothard's presence.

One day when they met Lothard at Djurgården, Nathalie exclaimed to him, —

"Truly, my dear Baron, it looks as if you were still trying to find out a certain person's residence, so persistently do you attend me."

"Countess, I protest, it is chance alone that brings me in your way," answered Lothard.

"I do not believe you. You certainly deceived me when you said you had found the one you were seeking."

"I had found, but now again have lost her," said Lothard with emphasis. His eyes and Skuldfrið's met.

"That is to say, you have lost the trace," jested Nathalie, "and you hope to find it again through me."

"Countess, it is so long since I hoped, that I dare not venture again." Lothard's eyes rested on Skuldfrið, whose heart threatened to burst.

"Well, why then do you pursue me?" asked Nathalie, laughing.

"I am like the steel which is drawn to the magnet; I obey the power of attraction, in defiance of my will and my reason."

"You are divine. By and by you will end in making me a tender proposal, against your will," said Nathalie in sport.

"Countess, I shall never make any tender proposal. I shall never say to any woman the words, 'I love you.'" Again Lothard's and Skuldfrið's eyes met. At the same instant Nathalie turned to Lothard and caught the glance he fastened upon Skuldfrið.

"Aha!" thought she with a certain resentment, "I believe the words are addressed to me, but their meaning to Frida."

Without allowing her unpleasant feelings to be perceived, Nathalie said, turning to Skuldfrið, —

"What do you think, the Baron has

for two whole years been the most zealous of all who have paid me their homage. At promenades, balls, suppers, concerts, *soirées*, and operas, everywhere has he waited upon me and at each occasion exerted all his power to be amiable."

"Pardon me, my gracious Countess, you slander me. I have never attempted anything so impossible as to be amiable."

"Take care, Baron, or I might take the notion to mention the whole story to Madame Dorbino."

"That is not very likely, you *shall* not betray me," said Lothard.

"Shall I not?" asked Nathalie, defiantly.

"No."

"Since you defy me, I will immediately prove that I do what pleases me. Do you know why the Baron has waited upon me?" continued Nathalie, turning to Skuldfrið. "For the simple reason, that he wished to know of me —"

"In the name of grace, Countess, do not continue, I beseech you!" exclaimed Lothard, with so much intensity that his whole appearance changed.

"He does not wish her to know of his interest for Mademoiselle Smidt," thought Nathalie, "and just for that reason she must hear of it." Aloud she said: "I give no grace, and therefore Frida shall know that you followed me in the hope of finding out where a certain Mademoiselle Smidt lived."

"Mademoiselle Smidt!" repeated Skuldfrið, putting her handkerchief before her glowing face.

Lothard rode silently at the side of the carriage, without throwing a glance inside. The Countess continued, —

"And I have decided that he shall not have his wish gratified through me."

"The Countess's decision proceeds from the fact that she does not know her residence," rejoined Lothard. He raised his hat, bowed, and was soon out of sight.

Ever since the evening when Skuldfrið and Lothard met the first time at Nathalie's house, the latter had been seized with a violent fancy for him. It was not yet anything but a fancy; what it might become was still uncertain. Her ordinary admirers seemed to her flat, her friends and associates stupid and tedious, the only one except Lothard that interested her was Skuldfrið. This interest was at the present period real, though the motives which actuated it were selfish. She found pleasure in Skuldfrið's lively and spirited conversation, and she had much to study and learn of her. Nathalie felt that in grace and attraction, in that irresistible power of charming, she stood far behind the singer. These qualities, which were natural with Skuldfrið, Nathalie could and must appropriate to herself.

The day after their drive to Djurgården, when Lothard and Nathalie had exchanged the words so full of significance to Skuldfrið, we find the last named in her cabinet. Her whole being bore the impress of hope and joy.

The Countess came in, and after she had spoken at random about indifferent things, she said quite suddenly, —

"When and where have you and Canitz met?"

"My dear Nathalie, why do you persist in asserting that he and I have met before?" answered Skuldfrið evasively. Nathalie perceived from her tone that she was displeased.

"I do not persist at all, I merely ask a question. It seems to displease you?"

"Yes, it does."

"Well then, I will not repeat it."

"She knows him," thought Nathalie with vexation. "She always gives evasive answers whenever I make an inquiry in regard to this matter."

"My special errand," resumed the Countess, "was to scold you for depriving me of one of my warmest and most

faithful admirers, one of the few in whose affection I almost trusted."

"And who is that?" asked Skuldfrið, smiling. "I am not conscious of having caught any admirer, and consequently cannot have robbed you."

"But Lieutenant Aberney?"

"Ah! Tage." Skuldfrið laughed. "If he has been in love with you, then I am willing that you should keep him. He and I are only friends of childhood."

"That is all well and good; but ever since your arrival here he has not visited me, although I have invited him, and besides he has evidently avoided me. Admit that he is in love with his childhood's friend."

"God forbid!" said Skuldfrið quite devoutly.

"She is not attached to young Aberney," thought Nathalie; "she is decidedly in love with that man of granite."

Nathalie leaned her head on her hand and happened at the same time to cast her eyes on a flower-vase, containing a bouquet of myrtle and orange-blossoms.

"From whom have you received that?" asked she, drawing the vase towards her.

"I do not know, it has been sent to me," replied Skuldfrið, but at the same time colored; for she thought of Lothard unavoidably.

The Countess said nothing, although she very well remarked the change of color. She looked at the bouquet attentively, as if she wished to find out all about it.

Skuldfrið had appeared four times. On each succeeding occasion she received livelier demonstrations of approval from the public. She always found Lothard in the lower private box, and upon her return home after the opera she found a wreath of cypress and laurel in place of the bouquet of myrtle.

The day before Skuldfrið's fifth ap-

pearance the Countess had begged her persistently to attend the ball that she was to give as a farewell to the winter's entertainments. Skuldfrið knew that she should there meet Lothard, which she very much desired after that last conversation, and yet she hesitated. Did she fear to see him? No, but she feared to see the hope she still cherished destroyed. His frigid respect was to her a torment, which occasioned her acute suffering. Finally she took the resolution to fulfil the Countess's desire by being present at the ball. While Skuldfrið was dressing herself for the occasion, she held the following mental soliloquy, —

"I must have a conversation with him this evening. I must know why he has been seeking Mademoiselle Smidt and yet refused Skuldfrið a meeting. I wish to understand what he meant when he said, I have found her and lost her again." She pressed her hand to her heart and looked at her truly lovely figure in the mirror, continuing in thought, "O, if I could only for this single evening be beautiful, so beautiful, that — I might in his soul recall the past."

Skuldfrið, who naturally liked a certain richness of attire, was this evening extremely simple. She was dressed entirely in white, and her hair was adorned only with blue flowers and wheat. She wore no glittering jewels, but merely a garniture of the same blue flowers.

Professor Aberney was again her escort. Tage, at Skuldfrið's solicitation, and in order to escape her jesting assertions that he did not dare to brave the danger of the Countess's presence, had decided to attend the ball, to show Skuldfrið that he took no especial interest in the Countess.

Skuldfrið liked to dance, for she danced well. The evening was far advanced when Lothard arrived. Skuldfrið discovered him while in the midst of a waltz with Tage. It was the first

time Tage had carried her around in the whirl of the dance. God and Skuldfrið only know how it was possible that he did not in his delirium betray all that his heart felt. The truth is that Skuldfrið's cold mien almost frightened him, and was all that restrained his feelings. When the waltz ended and Tage was to conduct her from the dancing-saloon, they passed by Lothard. He greeted Skuldfrið with a colder and more polite bow than usual. Tage threw a triumphant glance at him, as if he could have said, "She belongs to me; she is lost to you."

Tage had feared that Lothard, through an explanation of his absence in Naples, should completely ruin him and at once resume his former place in Skuldfrið's heart; but as this explanation had not yet taken place, although two weeks had passed since their first meeting, he took it for granted that Skuldfrið had averted it. Tage's self-love whispered to him besides so many foolish hopes, that upon these he felt sure of Skuldfrið. Was it at all likely that now, after she had found him to be the same friend as of old, her heart could betray the faith she owed him? No! To prevent all unseasonable declarations between her and Lothard, Tage determined to advance his own claims the very next day. Skuldfrið should decide the future. She must and should keep her faith to him. These were the thoughts that revolved in his brain while he stood beside her chair, talking of indifferent things.

"Herr Lieutenant, how shall I explain your behavior lately?" uttered a jesting voice behind him, in such accents that one could have taken the voice for Skuldfrið's. Tage colored and turned round. Before him stood Nathalie, with her finger raised threateningly. Her gaze was directed upon the young man with a peculiar expression.

"Countess Renstein, I do not comprehend your meaning," answered Tage,

who felt with an inner shudder that not even Skuldfrið's presence could protect him from the dangerous influence of the Countess.

"Do you not?" Nathalie leaned her head to one side and smiled in such a charming way that she made Tage quite uneasy.

"Give me your arm, Lieutenant Aberney, and I will explain myself." With this the Countess withdrew, leaning on Tage's arm, saying to Skuldfrið as she left, —

"I will rob you of your cavalier for a moment."

"And I, I must speak with *him*," thought Skuldfrið. "Cost what it will, the ice shall be broken."

She rose to go and try to find Lothard, but reseated herself immediately, for he was coming towards her from the opposite direction.

"I hope, Madame, that you are well this evening?" said he in French, and seated himself beside her, casting a rapid and searching glance upon the persons in their vicinity. Skuldfrið answered the question, but in a voice that totally lacked the calmness which characterized Lothard's.

"Are you engaged for this polka?" asked he in Italian, when he discovered that people were observing them with curiosity.

"Yes, for this as well as all the rest," replied Skuldfrið in the same language.

"And you intend to dance it?" Lothard looked at her. His eyes said: "Do not dance."

"No, I do not mean to dance any more this evening." Skuldfrið smiled quite mischievously.

"Indeed!" Lothard looked up at the ceiling with an indifferent air. "You wish to retain the impression of the last waltz unweakened."

"No, not that; but dancing does not entertain me any longer."

(In Naples it is customary to invite a

lady for the whole evening, either for dancing or conversation, or both. In short, she belongs to her partner during the hours of the ball, and in this way a ball may acquire something of real interest.)

"You have said that you did not intend to dance any more this evening; is that so?"

"Most surely; the heat is so oppressive."

"Good, in that case I take the liberty of inviting you to converse through this polka. Do you accept it?"

"With pleasure."

"When the music begins I will be here again." Lothard rose and went to a lady who sat at a little distance from them. He took a seat beside her. Skuldfrið dismissed her partner, alleging the heat and her fear of becoming hoarse as her excuse. Lothard thought while he was speaking to Countess ***, —

"She has understood my unexpressed wish. She still preserves the heart's instinct. Now, Skuldfrið, it remains to be seen how well you can stand the proof you are to undergo, whether your feelings are truly attached to me, or if you will again sacrifice Lothard for him. Yes, I must be on my guard, that my all-engrossing weakness does not again master my reason and make me her slave. O Skuldfrið, Skuldfrið! would that you could restore my faith in you, then I should forget all the pangs you have occasioned my heart. May you never hope, however, that I shall be the first to speak of love to you. No, the heart you once rejected, you must now *take*, it can never more be offered you."

The first measures of the galop sounded. Countess ***'s partner came to lead her away. Lothard resumed his place by Skuldfrið.

"We mortals can never act without a motive," began Lothard, in a somewhat unsteady voice; "and as this is a generally accepted rule, Madame, so there was

a purpose in my requesting this dance of you."

"I have understood this," answered Skuldfrið; "and if you had not prepared an opportunity for us to converse, you would have obliged me to do it. You owe me an explanation."

"That is true." Lothard exerted himself to control the emotion that threatened to overcome him. "I ought to have given it to you at our very first meeting, but —"

"You did not consider Skuldfrið deserving of it," whispered the young woman.

"Madame, had I found Skuldfrið again, I would not have delayed a minute in giving an explanation which has been my greatest grief for two years not to be able to render."

Lothard passed his hand over his brow, fastened a stern look upon Skuldfrið's glowing face, and continued, —

"One evening I visited the opera to hear a celebrated singer, a woman, one who had travelled around the world to win admiration and applause; in a word, an *actress*. Madame, it was impossible for me to recognize Skuldfrið in her. It was almost repugnant to me to render the explanation that burned in my heart to *Madame Dorbino*. Skuldfrið could not possibly be the widow of the composer Dorbino." Lothard ceased.

"It may be," said Skuldfrið in a tone perfectly free from the emotion which a moment before had revealed itself in her voice, "that you, like the generality of people, can not and will not understand that the singer is an artist, but allow your prejudice to rule you; still you ought not to have forgotten what courtesy demands, especially towards a woman." Skuldfrið now spoke with that unrestrained frankness which distinguished her as a young girl.

"Do you require me, to act from courtesy towards you, Madame?"

"I ask what every woman has the right to demand."

"Even that is impossible. When I found in Madame Dorbino the one who had once *been* Skuldfrið, she could not be an object of my courtesy, but merely a person to whom I showed *respect*."

"Respect," repeated Skuldfrið, smiling. "Do you show your respect in responding with silence to the request I once addressed to you? You did not even send a word of empty politeness as an excuse, but you allowed the woman who asked of you an interview to wait in vain. You said to her through this that you did not consider yourself bound to observe the requirements of politeness towards her. You did not *then* know however that Skuldfrið had entered upon a career which you disapproved. It was not Madame Dorbino to whom you showed disrespect in Naples, but it was —"

"The woman I once adored," interrupted Lothard in an agitated voice. "Madame, may God spare you from experiencing what I felt when I received your note *too late*."

"Then you did receive it?"

"Yes, but through an unfortunate event, which I cannot explain more fully, I did not receive it until seven o'clock of the same evening that you desired to see me. Ah! did you not make it impossible for me to find you again? Could you believe for a moment that I would not have hastened to obey a call from Skuldfrið?"

"Thanks for these words." A tear trembled on her eyelash, and she smiled gently.

A tear in Skuldfrið's eyes. Lothard, Lothard, what had become of your proud resolutions? were you prepared to resist this danger? Most assuredly not; he bent hastily forward, as if to seize her hand, his lips parted to utter words of far different import from that which the cold reason dictated; but just then the

dancers swarmed into the saloon and the next instant Nathalie, leaning on Tage's arm, stood before them.

"What, Herr Baron, are you not dancing?" exclaimed Nathalie.

"I am waiting for the waltz that you so kindly promised me," answered Lothard, rising.

"And in the mean time you hinder Madame Dorbino from dancing."

"By no means, Madame Dorbino does not dare to dance any more this evening, for fear of becoming hoarse. We have been conversing about Naples," added Lothard, and looked at Tage.

"Yes, you were both there at the same time," returned the Countess, looking fixedly at Lothard. "It was just there that Frida inquired after you of one of the officers of the Carolina."

"Countess, you are too good, you condescend to flatter," said Lothard, bowing coldly to Nathalie.

"Ah! that man makes me frantic with his unapproachable manner," thought she.

"They have spoken of Naples," said Tage mentally, and pressed his lips together. "But what then? Skuldfrið will only see in my conduct another proof of how madly I love her. To-morrow the lot shall be cast."

A little while afterwards Lothard approached Tage, saying, —

"You can be calm, I neither have nor ever will tell Madame Dorbino who or what it was that hindered me from obeying Skuldfrið's call." Without awaiting Tage's reply Lothard left him.

During the remainder of the evening it was impossible for Lothard to get a chance to exchange a word with Skuldfrið, so environed was she. Those who were the most captivated expressed their encomiums over Madame Dorbino to Tage. Lothard heard him say, to those who praised Skuldfrið, that he was a relative of hers.

The following day, on which Tage had determined that his fate should be decided, Skuldfrið had to attend rehearsal in the forenoon, and in the evening she was to appear; consequently the young gentleman was not received, and was thus obliged to postpone his assault until another day; but who knows what the future may have in store?

That evening the left-hand box was empty. The clear, cold dark eyes did not meet Skuldfrið's. When she reached home Anaise did not present her as usual any wreath of laurel and cypress. Skuldfrið missed it and felt sad, both over this and Lothard's absence from the opera. Was he sick, or why did he stay away?

Tage was also hindered the next day from calling on Skuldfrið. His service compelled him to remain where duty demanded his presence. Skuldfrið spent the day with Nathalie, as she was accustomed to do when not at the Aberneys' or desirous of being alone.

Nathalie had a few of her intimate friends to dinner; among these was Lothard. They chatted merrily at the dinner-table; Nathalie was charming, Skuldfrið glad.

However deeply Skuldfrið loved Lothard, she had never allowed grief or the sorrow her love caused her to depress her soul or change her naturally happy disposition into a sickly peevishness. She had folded her bitterest sorrows, her most painful sufferings, in a mantle of trust, which made her always look upon the future with faith and hope. If she found that hope deluded her, then she bowed her head humbly under trial, but lifted it again thinking, —

"That which I hoped and wished for could not have been right, therefore I was deprived of it; or may be that I employed the wrong means. Well, then, I *will* begin to work again, sustained by faith and hope."

Often when Lothard saw Skuldfrið's

beaming and lively eyes, her smiling lips, and heard her fresh laughter, he doubted if her heart could contain any deep feeling or if it was capable of great joys or griefs; but he had only to meet her eyes in an unguarded moment to change his opinion. Here was then so much of pure feeling and warmth in these mirrors of the soul, that he realized the fervor and intensity of her nature.

Yet it was not of this that we intended to speak, but of Nathalie and her guests.

They had left the table, and the coffee was passed round. Skuldfriid was sitting at one of the open windows of the saloon and several gentlemen were standing before her, Lothard among the rest. They were speaking of music and composers. One of the gentlemen said to Lothard, —

"Baron, you were not at the opera last evening to be enchanted with Madame Dorbino's tones."

"No, I did not dare to expose myself to that danger," replied Lothard with a peculiar accent. "I retained too lively an impression of the last time I heard her, to venture again within the sphere of the singer's influence."

"Say rather," interposed Skuldfriid laughing, "that you wished to spare yourself an infliction."

"An infliction, Madame?" repeated one of the gentlemen with astonishment.

"Precisely. Baron Canitz is not a friend of music."

"Indeed! That sounds strange. The Baron attends nearly all the concerts and is always to be found at the opera when a good one is to be rendered."

"Sacrifices are sometimes made to fashion; is it not so, Herr Baron?" Skuldfriid turned directly to Lothard and fastened upon him a roguish and challenging look. Lothard, who had remained mute, now found himself forced to reply.

"Madame, one never contradicts a lady. I could never so forget myself."

The conversation continued in this spirit. Skuldfriid jested and forced Lothard to take part in a more joyous tone than usual.

A little later we find Skuldfriid and Lothard alone at the window, others having withdrawn, but how this happened neither of them could tell; the reason could easily have been found in the fact that Lothard held the thread of conversation almost exclusively, and that in such a way that Skuldfriid became the only one who took part in it. When the last gentleman left them, Lothard said with his ironical smile, —

"I have now forced them all to leave the field." He took his seat opposite Skuldfriid adding, "So you think, Madame, that I detest music?"

"At least those who devote themselves to it," answered Skuldfriid.

"Have I ever expressed anything of the kind?"

"Most certainly, you said it *here* two days ago."

"Pardon me, I only said that I could not find Skuldfriid in Madame Dorbino."

"And therefore you did not go to hear the latter yesterday."

"I have heard her four times, and if I had heard her the fifth, I might have been in danger of forgetting Skuldfriid."

"Your meaning is so ambiguous that I do not comprehend it." Skuldfriid looked up fearlessly into his dangerous eyes.

"The encomiums and applause that overwhelm Madame Dorbino profane the Finnish girl; so it seems to me."

"Baron, you are as full of prejudice as a woman or a child. Let us leave this subject." The tone in which Skuldfriid said this had something of the old temper which reminded Lothard but too vividly of the Finnish girl.

"You accuse me of being full of prejudice, you are wrong; I am only faithful to my once established principles."

"Antipathy to a certain class or voca-

tion cannot be called principle; it is only prejudice. You belong perhaps to those who do not consider that woman has the right to avail herself of the advantages nature has given her to make herself independent. In your estimation she is probably something so inferior, that she ought not to take a single step without the direction of some man."

"Not at all; I place woman so high, that I consider her created for something nobler than to be a diversion for the multitude. She is the superior of man in actual human worth. It is therefore painful to see her occupy a position in which she makes herself an object that all feel themselves free to criticise, praise, elevate, or degrade, according to their pleasure. Woman is the secret power that rules the world; and just this unfits her for any kind of publicity, or then the enchantment is broken and her power destroyed. There is no great and noble action, no revolution in society or important event in the world at large, that has not started from a woman. She is the mother of virtue, heroism, and courage, and therefore —"

"She ought to be a nun," retorted Skuldfrið, laughing.

"Madame, her mission is not to bind laurels for her own vanity, but to twine myrtle around the altar of love."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Nathalie, coming towards them.

"About love and fame," answered Lothard. "I affirm that the laurels of fame are for man, but the myrtle wreath of love for woman."

"That is to say, the Baron maintains the theory that we women ought to spend our lives in adoring you men, while you adorn yourselves with all the distinctions that fame can bestow, and reap every advantage that life can yield. You wish to be loved, without the trouble of loving."

"Countess Renstein, we waste in our first love so much of self-sacrifice and

adoration on you women, that you can never afterwards return us what we then give you."

"You think so; but I fear your self-sacrifice and adoration are not of the true kind; you are too egotistical and changeable for that. How many times have you, for example, been in love?"

"Only once." Lothard's glance flew over to Skuldfrið.

"That is to say one love and many objects."

"My heart possessed only one object for its love."

"Possessed. You speak of a time that is past."

"True."

"But you may love once more?"

"Be loved, you mean," said Lothard, and again threw a glance at Skuldfrið.

"That is to say, you have decided to allow yourself to be loved."

"Exactly," replied Lothard, smiling. "I desire nothing more deeply than to be right heartily loved."

"But if you desire that," said Skuldfrið, "must not you yourself love?"

"Yes," added Nathalie, "you certainly cannot hope that any woman will come to you and say, 'Baron Canitz, I am in love with you.'"

"Countess, that is just what I do hope. Before she gives her heart to me, I shall never express what mine contains; this I have vowed to myself."

"Then you are likely to keep your heart's secret until your death," declared Nathalie.

"Hardly would any woman of fine feeling so degrade herself as to declare her love to you, before you had first done it to her," said Skuldfrið.

"Madame, I think you said degrade herself," rejoined Lothard, with animation. "In what does the degradation consist, if I may ask?"

"In giving her holiest feelings as a prize and exposing herself to the humiliation of seeing them rejected and tram-

pled upon by the man to whom she reveals them," replied Skuldfrið, also with spirit.

"Why should they be trampled upon and rejected? Is it then more culpable for woman to possess a heart than for man? You told me awhile ago that I was full of prejudice; permit me to throw back the accusation. It seems to me unnatural that woman should wait like a slave for the moment when man allows her to clothe her feeling in words. Is it not more in accordance with her worth that she, like man, should possess the right to offer her heart to him, without being obliged to wait for the moment when he pleases to take it. A woman perceives more quickly and surely when her love is reciprocated than man ever does. She is not blinded by an engrossing self-love, but she judges of the feelings with the swift and sure intuition that belongs to her. She is consequently less subject to mistake than man, and she does not risk seeing her hopes deceived. It is very certain," continued Lothard, "that the words *I love* shall never pass my lips until I have first heard them addressed to me. Never shall I say, 'Become mine,' before she has said, 'I am yours.' Once I offered my heart to a woman, she rejected it; and now—"

"Now you desire that the one you next honor with your attention shall lay her heart at your feet?" rejoined Nathalie.

"No, she shall give it to me without my asking for it."

"Under such conditions you will certainly never have it," said Skuldfrið.

Nathalie was forced to leave them. She was obliged to go and receive a new guest.

Lothard now said in a quivering voice, —

"Then you think I shall never obtain what I desire? And yet I have resolved, that even if I am obliged to drive her to

an extreme, so that she fails under the struggle, I must eventually get her to give me her heart voluntarily and say to me that I am dear to her."

"But if she first desires to hear this from you?"

"Then her will must yield to mine."

"You demand the impossible."

"Mark, Madame, I demand nothing; I only say that I have decided never to speak the language of love to any woman but the one who has first *shown* that she loves me."

"Then I fear you will never speak this language."

Skuldfrið rose from her seat. A peculiarly indignant flush suffused her cheeks.

"I do not share this fear with you. Fate owes me the recompense of bringing in my way a woman heroic enough to be *true*. My whole life will I sacrifice to her after she has given me an affection which I never would have dared to ask for."

"Baron Canitz, you will look in vain for a proud woman who would offer her heart upon the altar of your self-love. She would rather let it break."

"And in that case mine with hers. She then becomes the destroyer of both her own happiness and mine."

"It will be somewhat difficult for her to realize that she has destroyed your happiness, when you have not apprised her that she held it in her hands."

Lothard (who had also risen and now stood before Skuldfrið) fastened his eyes upon her as he said, —

"Madame, you do not mean to say that a woman who loves does not know when her feeling is responded to? Love has no need of words; it speaks through acts."

"In that case she need not declare herself either, but only let actions do it."

Skuldfrið went away. Lothard looked after her and murmured to himself, —

"Skuldfrið, you know Lothard poorly,

such as he now is, if you think he will not induce you to show him both by words and acts that you realize that his love merits the sacrifice of your pride."

In the forenoon of the next day, Tage presented himself before Skuldfrið. His recent decision had changed somewhat. He desired to test his influence over Skuldfrið, by trying to persuade her to leave the stage. He, who loved her so deeply, had the right to demand this sacrifice; and before this was accomplished, he would not claim the fulfilment of a promise which, according to his idea, bound her to him.

Besides there was a little secret which had the effect of deterring him from rushing ahead with his courtship according to his first impulse, and this secret was — Nathalie.

Tage did not love her; there was nothing in his fancy for her that could be compared to the deep and strong feeling that attached him to Skuldfrið; but she nevertheless exercised a great influence over his mind and imagination. He had waited upon her zealously for two years, was jealous of all who rejoiced in her favor; and especially of Lothard, who appropriated her attention at every opportunity. Tage had in the beginning paid Nathalie his homage, fully convinced that she, one of the foolish children of the world, would become an easy conquest and reward him very soon with some favor flattering to his vanity; but to his great surprise he found that Nathalie could play with her adorers, without bestowing any preference whatever.

The temptation of conquering one who had not allowed any other to do it had during the past two years driven Tage to the commission of many a folly and induced him to utter words which very much resembled declarations of love. All this made him feel an actual aversion to

meeting Nathalie after he had found Skuldfrið again, and he consequently avoided her. The cunning woman had however forced him to be present at the ball, and while waltzing had reproached him mildly for his absence; this inspired Tage with the daring hope that she cherished a warm interest for him, especially as these reproaches were accompanied by a few tears in those wonderful eyes. *He was not indifferent to her*, this he read in every feature of her face. Her tearful eyes told him that *he was dear to her*.

Our poor Tage was, in spite of his Finnish blood, a true son of Adam, weak when he believed himself the object of the woman's tenderness he had been trying for two years to win. She blinded his reason, she intoxicated his senses, and although he would not have sacrificed an hour's favor from Skuldfrið to possess her, it was still something that flattered his self-love. When the first day after the ball passed without his being able to declare himself to Skuldfrið, fate so ordered it that he met Nathalie in the evening at the opera, and was treated by her in a way that inspired him with the firm belief that he was loved. He now found it difficult, just as the victory seemed to be his, to inform her of his love for Skuldfrið, and to declare with sympathy that he had never loved her, etc. He was not quite sure enough of Skuldfrið to throw away a happiness that smiled at him so fair and charming. If Skuldfrið should now retract her promise, if she, ruined by theatrical life, lightly played with his heart and sacrificed his faithful devotion, what should then mitigate his despair and console him for his grief, if he repulsed the heart that was offered him? Tage was to test Skuldfrið, he would give her an opportunity to prove whether she had any affection for him. He would be constantly at her side, giving her a thousand opportunities of seeing how sincerely he loved her, but he should not remind her

of the promise she had once given before he had had time to convince himself whether she possessed the same faithful character that she manifested as a young girl.

The letter to Lothard in Naples had in a terrible manner shaken his faith in her love. There were moments when reason told him that every word contained in it disclosed that Skuldfrið was attached to Lothard. But then came egotism, suppressing reason, and declaring that he, Tage, had had the promise of her hand for six years, and that she as an honorable woman could not break it. Besides Lothard's cold manner towards Skuldfrið had given Tage the conviction that his feelings for her were subordinate to his pride, and that *he* with perseverance could regain the first place in her heart.

Tage's behavior was in accordance with this manner of reasoning. At his visit to Skuldfrið he spoke as a tender brother; entreated her in the name of their friendship to abandon a career in which she had already won so much celebrity that her vanity ought to be satisfied, and in which she had accumulated sufficient for her pecuniary independence. He spoke of the dangers, intrigues, and of all the malevolence that pursues a person of distinguished talent. He showed that Skuldfrið had hitherto escaped these annoyances very fortunately, and that it was always wisest to withdraw from public life when at the meridian of success, rather than when it began to decline. Skuldfrið listened to him with the same mischievous look that she had as a young girl when Tage used to moralize. She let him speak to the end without interrupting him, and though her roguish expression did not indicate that she took his words very deeply to heart or attached any serious importance to them, still he was content that she let him express himself fully without interruption.

"Now, dear Skuldfrið," said Tage in

conclusion, seizing her hand, "I have told you my conviction, and this view of your position I believe to be the right one." His eyes rested upon her with so warm an expression that they told but too plainly what his lips still concealed. Skuldfrið's answer would decide whether this declaration should yet for a while remain within him, or whether he should let the impulse of the moment conquer. One word of approval or compliance, and Tage would have forgotten Nathalie to throw himself at Skuldfrið's feet; but she, who read in every feature what was passing in his soul, took good care not to give the smallest occasion for a declaration that could not fail to be painful to them both.

"Thanks for your good intentions, Tage," said Skuldfrið, "but you must forgive me if I smile at all the dangers you have pictured. The career I have chosen is not so thorny as you wish to imagine, and therefore, my friend, I do not intend to abandon it. I love my artistic calling with all my heart and soul. I am only twenty-three," Skuldfrið smiled so hopefully, "and this is altogether too early to withdraw from the world, become a philosopher, and rest upon my laurels in some obscure corner of the earth. No, my right place is on the stage, and there I will remain. If you are willing, we will waste no further words upon the subject."

"You then scorn my advice?"

"Not at all; but I think your speech pedantic, and, allow me to say it, somewhat too narrow and full of prejudice. It savors a little of the *country town*."

Skuldfrið had chosen her words with perfect knowledge of Tage's sensitive vanity and with that lack of mercy which even the best women show towards the man who loves them, but whom they do not love in return. She wished to pique Tage, so as to restrain him from speaking of feelings that she did not share.

Tage left Skuldfrið that day deeply

wounded by her words and less confident of his success than ever. All this had a depressing effect upon his mind, and he in vain tried to cast it off through a visit to Nathalie.

Tage, however, was not one of those who give out because they meet opposition. No, he now resolved firmer than ever to be with Skuldfrið as much as possible, to attend her in her promenades, go with her to and from the opera, visit her as often as she was at home, and arrange it so that she could be at Aberney's house most of the time. Tage carried out his purpose with perfect consistency.

Some days after this Skuldfrið appeared for the sixth time and with increasing success. That evening she found Lothard in his box, and at her return home she received a wreath of laurel and cypress.

"It is from *him*," thought Skuldfrið, and kissed the wreath.

The next day Nathalie met Lothard while she was promenading in Charles XIII. Square.

"You were at the opera last evening, how did you like Madame Dorbino?" asked she.

"She sang ravishingly as ever," was the reply.

"You are right, and it would be a pity if young Aberney succeeded in obtaining her hand, for then she could not as his wife return to Paris and London, but would have to remain here. Our Swedish stage is too insignificant to appropriate talent of the first order."

"It is not very likely that Madame Dorbino will marry."

"On the contrary, it is more than likely, it is highly probable. Have you not seen how persistently Lieutenant Aberney pursues her?"

"What does that prove? Only that he as a relative tries to press his claims."

"You do not wish to believe in their

intended betrothal. I do not think you are very well pleased with it."

"Countess, I am never displeased at the success of others."

"I can assure you that young Aberney intends to offer Madame Dorbino his heart, and I know from good authority that *No* will not be the word with which she answers his proposal."

Just then the Countess and Lothard turned at the end of the avenue and found themselves opposite a lady and gentleman.

"Ah, there is Frida!" exclaimed Nathalie. "How do you do, Lieutenant Aberney," added she, turning to the latter with one of her most charming smiles.

"We have come to find you, Countess," said Tage. "Skuldfrið said that you had agreed to meet her here."

"But not with you," answered the Countess, laughing.

"I accompanied Skuldfrið." Tage bowed.

Lothard took his leave with a world of doubt in his breast.

Quite early the following morning, before Skuldfrið had yet risen, Nathalie came in to her.

"See here, Frida, hurry and dress yourself!" she exclaimed. "I have decided that you and I shall spend the day out at Rosenvik, our summer residence."

"No, that is out of the question," declared Skuldfrið; "I have made another engagement."

"Without my consent; but where?"

"At Uncle Aberney's."

"That promise cannot be kept. I intend to carry off the Professor, and what is worse still, I have already obtained his consent. So hurry up and make a rustic toilet. I will be your lady's maid."

She gave no grace. Skuldfrið was obliged to let Nathalie dress her just as she pleased. The result was that both

ladies were attired alike. When Skuldfrið was ready, Nathalie placed herself beside her in front of the toilet-glass, saying, —

"You are far ahead of me in beauty, and yet I have made up my mind to keep your adorer, young Aberney, for myself; a pretty resolution, when he is so desperately in love with you."

"I will resign him with great pleasure," declared Skuldfrið.

"And moreover I have resolved that" — Nathalie looked at Skuldfrið — "that marble statue Canitz shall become in love with me."

If Skuldfrið's life had been at stake, she could not have kept from changing color.

"Why, my dear child, I believe you are blushing. Could you possibly have any designs on him on your own account?"

"Dear Nathalie, do me the favor not to talk about Canitz," said Skuldfrið.

"With pleasure, my friend; though you must excuse me if I find your behavior a little strange; but never mind, put on your hat and let us go to Djurgården."

The Countess's equipage was waiting at the entrance, and a tall, slender gentleman stood at the door of the carriage. Skuldfrið recognized Lothard.

"The Baron is going with us to Rosen-vik," said Nathalie.

The next moment the two ladies and Lothard sat in the comfortable barouche which rolled away over Gustaf Adolf's Square, past the Opera House, and so to Djurgården. As they drove by Thalia's temple, Nathalie, who was that day in the best of spirits, said, —

"The Stockholm public have here rendered you their enthusiastic homage; here you have enchanted them with your tones, charmed them with your acting, and made them crazy with your beauty. There must be an intoxicating pleasure in being able to call forth such exalted

admiration. Have you not felt proud of yourself at such moments?"

Lothard looked at Skuldfrið when she answered, —

"No, not proud, but very grateful to God for allowing me to succeed."

"But how is it possible for a young woman voluntarily to become a singer?" said Lothard. "From whence do you derive the courage to appear before hundreds of people?"

"You ask me two questions at once," said Skuldfrið, smiling.

"Answer them one at a time, dear Frida," suggested Nathalie.

"Well then, I will answer the first by asking the Baron another: how is it that you have become a seaman?"

"From calling. It was the only vocation that I was inclined to, the only one I was fitted for."

"Very well, one who becomes a singer also follows her calling, and, what is more, she uses this vocation as a means of making a living. I was a *poor* girl; God had given me a good voice; I was told that I could gain a support by it; I became a singer."

"And art and the world made a conquest," observed Nathalie, who perceived with inner vexation that Lothard did not turn his eyes from Skuldfrið. A pause ensued, during which Skuldfrið was wrapped in thought. She resumed after a moment, —

"You ask how I can have the courage to appear. What I am now going to say you will perhaps not believe, and yet it is the truth. When the curtain rises and I step upon the stage, I have only one thought, one that fills my whole soul, and that is the idea of the composer whose music I am to sing. It is the same to me whether there are a thousand persons or one in the Opera House. The audience is forgotten, I am unmindful of all these listening ears; it is as if I had the spirit of the composer at my side, to watch over me that I do not

render his beautiful conceptions unworthily."

"But the applause, the encores and loads of bouquets, all this must call you back to reality," said Nathalie.

"Most certainly." Skuldfrið now smiled in the same childish manner as when she had so often driven away Lothard's gloomy thoughts in younger years, and which Nathalie had imitated so perfectly.

"And your heart beats with joy."

"I then dare to believe that I have not spoiled the beautiful creation."

The conversation dwelt for a while upon art, music, and the drama. They spoke of celebrated artists and singers, their success and prosperity, etc. Lothard expressed himself generally with a certain prejudice against the stage, and a lively debate consequently ensued. The vexation that Nathalie had experienced when Lothard looked at Skuldfrið disappeared when he expressed himself so openly in her presence against those who devoted themselves to the stage. She took Skuldfrið's part, and Lothard was thus obliged to contend against two. When all arguments for and against had been advanced, and both sides had exhausted their resources, Lothard said in conclusion, —

"With two such opponents as you ladies, it is impossible for me to hold out any longer. One thing I know, that if my opinion is never so erroneous, it still proceeds from my conviction. I should never *dare* to believe in *the one* who, with the ease of an actress, can assume feelings that are alien to her, and give such a natural stamp to her performance as to draw tears from the eyes of the spectators. The question springs up involuntarily, When does art cease and truth begin?"

"With such a conception of the dramatic artists' mind and character, it is natural that you should have an inferior opinion of their moral worth," said Skuldfrið.

"Be it far from me, Madame, to wound any in my remarks upon this subject; what I have said is only the expression of my individual opinion."

Nathalie changed the subject. In a short time they alighted at Rosenvik, where Professor Aberney, Tage, and a couple of ladies related to Nathalie, besides several other gentlemen, were already there to meet them.

Tage grew pale when he saw Lothard in company with Skuldfrið and Nathalie. He muttered a curse over the latter's notion of having him for escort.

Nathalie observed Tage's dissatisfaction. She knew how to dispel his gloomy looks, however, and the little company that assembled in the pavilion chatted away quite merrily.

Professor Aberney was particularly animated, saying a thousand pretty things to Nathalie, knowing how to unite the intellectual and agreeable in his manner, as well as to give life and interest to the most commonplace conversation.

The Professor related some droll anecdotes about Englishmen. The subject was taken up by the rest of the company, and each one had something to tell about Britain's highly original sons.

"The desire to be peculiar is certainly a disease with the English," said Nathalie, who had been laughing heartily at one of the stories. I will venture a bet that Frida has an Englishman for an admirer, and that it is he who sends her those ridiculous bouquets. What do you think about it yourself, my friend? Just think of it," continued the Countess, addressing the company, without waiting Skuldfrið's reply, "Madame Dorbino finds a bouquet of myrtle and orange-blossoms on her table every evening, tied with a black ribbon."

"That is a singular gift," exclaimed several of her hearers.

"And full of meaning besides," remarked the Professor, smiling. "Myrtle signifies love."

"And the black ribbon, sorrow," affirmed Nathalie. "Consequently it is some Englishman that has conceived an unhappy love for her and wishes to surprise her of his feelings in this way. Frida has been very considerate towards the melancholy sprigs of myrtle."

"In what way?" asked Lothard.

"Madame Dorbino has placed them in an especial vase on the table in her cabinet. The other poor bouquets were all crowded together on the flower-stand in the saloon. Anaise declared the other day that she felt provoked at the queer present, and said that she had never seen anything more stupid, especially as the bouquet is exchanged for a wreath of laurel and cypress every evening that Madame Dorbino appears."

"Laurel and cypress signifies the transitory nature of fame," said the Professor. "This is an allegorical adorer."

"And silent into the bargain; for Anaise tells me that she has searched through both bouquets and wreaths, without finding as much as a single syllable."

"It is easily seen that Anaise at least is not silent," remarked Skuldfrid, rising and going out into the garden. The others soon followed her.

"Offer Madame Dorbino your arm, Baron Canitz," exclaimed Nathalie, who was leaning on the Professor's, "and we will take a turn round the garden."

Tage flung an enraged look at Nathalie. She continued laughingly, —

"You, Lieutenant Aberney, will become Aunt A——'s escort."

"Will you take my arm, Madame," said Lothard to Skuldfrid, "or are you still afraid to receive the support of a Russian?"

"You have ceased to be a Russian, and I have —"

"Ceased to be the Finnish girl," rejoined Lothard.

"You are mistaken; I am *Finnish*

now as ever," declared Skuldfrid, laughing, and took his arm.

"Impossible! Madame Dorbino must be French, else she could not allow a thoughtless friend to know of things that have a serious significance."

"Ah! you mean the laurel and cypress."

"Have you thought of their meaning?"

"Uncle Aberney has interpreted it."

"And you have not sought any other?"

"No."

"Do you wish me to give you one?"

"Let me hear what it is."

Lothard stopped where they had a fine view, as if to contemplate it, and then continued, —

"It may signify that your celebrity is another's sorrow. You purchase your laurels at the expense of another's peace."

"And whose?"

"How should I know; the giver's perhaps."

"Can he envy me my success?"

"Is there then no other grief than that of envy?"

"Yes, certainly; but I do not understand its application in this case."

"Take a seat and allow me to tell you a story. There was once a boy, who had a rose-bush, which was his joy, his happiness, and all his wealth. The bush grew unobserved in a wild wood; its beautiful snow-white buds charmed no eye but his; he only inhaled their fragrance. Every day he went to kneel there, offering the rose-bush his homage and his heart's holiest admiration. It was his sanctuary, its innocent purity his joy, and every time he approached it he felt as if he ought first to examine his heart and his emotions ere he appeared before it. The rose-bush became a link between him and God. It shall be mine, thought he, and only my love and my caresses shall touch it; it shall never be sullied by the evil of the world. It shall die as it has lived in innocence, love, and peace. Thus

dreamed the boy, when one day he awoke and found the bush gone."

Lothard ceased. He looked sadly before him.

"And afterwards, how was it then?" asked Skuldfrið.

"Then years rolled on, and when he found the beautiful rose-bush again, it was no longer in the bosom of nature, but was paraded in a fine vase within an elegant saloon, surrounded by those who admired its beauty. It was as beautiful as ever, but it was no longer the same. Madame, *another* had owned and transplanted it. The boy's saint was no longer a being who was worshipped only by him, but a showy *ornament* that all paid homage to. The magical dream was destroyed, the blissful spell broken, and the boy's saint changed into one of the idols of the day, which is crowned with laurels one moment and forgotten the next. The applause that was bestowed upon the boy's former idol was a source of bitter grief to his heart; it reminded him of what he had possessed and what he had lost never to regain. In this way, Madame, may the reputation of one cost the peace of another." Lothard rose. "Now, if you please, we will seek the others," added he, "or we shall become a butt for the Countess's sarcasm."

Skuldfrið rose to leave the place. There was a strange mixture of feelings in her heart. Wounded pride, bitter grief at the thought of the past, and yet a firmer faith in the future than ever. When she took Lothard's arm, she said, —

"You have in your way interpreted the meaning of laurel and cypress; what explanation do you give to the myrtle and orange-blossoms?"

"They need no explanation," answered Lothard.

"And the black ribbon?"

"Black, Madame, signifies either sorrow or *death*."

"Death!" repeated Skuldfrið.

"Yes, a dead love. Put it all together and you have: Your artistic celebrity has occasioned a grief so great that it has killed love."

Lothard felt Skuldfrið's arm tremble. He felt the flutter of pain that his words had caused, and at this his heart beat with joy.

"It was a dearly purchased celebrity," faltered Skuldfrið.

"But it will surely console her for the loss sustained?" Lothard's dark eyes rested searchingly on Skuldfrið's pale cheeks.

"I hope so," replied she frigidly.

"If I loved a woman who was an actress or a singer, and she told me that I possessed her heart, do you know what I would answer?"

"That you had forgotten her, that her celebrity as an artist had killed your love. Prejudice would be more to you than the warmest feelings of the heart," answered Skuldfrið, not without bitterness.

"You are mistaken, Madame; if she *loved* me, then I should say: Sacrifice your celebrity for me, as a proof of your love, and I shall dare to believe in its sincerity."

"You demand much."

"True; but that comes from the fact that I formerly gave all and asked almost nothing."

"Now you demand *all* and give nothing."

"You are right; should I once more feel my heart warmed and my soul swayed by that all-powerful feeling we call *love*, then may my acts speak, not my words, never shall I ask her heart. She must take mine."

The Professor and Nathalie now came to meet them. Somewhat later they all partook of an exquisite repast on the veranda.

Nathalie was charming; Lothard devoted himself to her almost exclusively. Skuldfrið was glad and playful as a child

Tage dark and moody as an autumn sky ; the Professor amiable and attentive towards all.

After the repast the company sat in the saloon engaged in small talk. Tage threw himself down behind Skuldfrið. He maintained a consistent silence.

"I intend to prepare the Baron a surprise this afternoon," said Nathalie, turning towards Lothard.

"What may it be, if I may ask?" said Lothard.

"I have invited a person in whom you are much interested."

"It cannot be the one whose residence you have so persistently concealed." Lothard smiled ironically.

"O no ! It is a very, very old acquaintance."

"I will not indulge in a guess, but rather give myself up to the surprise that you have so kindly intended me."

"Good ; apropos, when do you sing again, Frida ? This somebody, who is coming here, told me that he would be very glad to hear your beautiful voice upon the Swedish stage."

"I do not know when it will be," replied Skuldfrið quite carelessly.

"You have only sung six times, and you have promised eight."

"I have not given any decided promise as to the number of times I was to appear."

But, Frida, you do not mean to say that —"

"I appeared yesterday for the last time," interrupted Skuldfrið, laughing.

"No, my friend, I certainly did not."

"How you do scare a person for nothing !"

Tage joined in with no slight shade of bitterness in his tone, —

"Skuldfrið loves her artistic career and her fame too much to wish to renounce the laurels which the Swedish public lay at her feet."

"Yes, you are right, Tage, I love my artistic career very dearly ; and that which could *now* induce me to abandon it must be something that is mightier than all other feelings in my breast. You are also right in supposing that I am proud of the approbation my countrymen bestow upon me. That will always be the most precious recollection of my artistic life, *when* it some time ends. I am to appear in *La Dame Blanche* in a few days," added she with a proud look at Tage.

"The foolish boy," thought the Professor ; "he so irritates her with his untimely attacks, that he will frustrate what other reasonable people accomplish. I have never seen a more senseless dolt than he is, when the question concerns women."

"Skuldfrið," said the Professor, "sing for us some of the old Finnish songs you sang as a child, if you have not forgotten them."

"Forgotten anything that reminds of Finland, of home, of my happy childhood ? Impossible !"

Without further solicitation, Skuldfrið went to the piano. Her marvellously beautiful tones were soon heard through the saloon. She sang one of Aberney's compositions, the very same that he had listened to when he met her as a little child.

The strong, calm, and sensible Aberney was so overcome by his recollections at hearing this song, that he rose and went to one of the windows to conceal his emotion. Melancholy, deeply melancholy, was the gaze with which he looked out ; and although this song evoked many bitter and sweet memories, the remembrance of Skuldfrið as a charming child was the most vivid. Ah ! he fancied that he still saw her sitting at his side and soothing his ear with her tones. How many delightful and yet foolish dreams had not the child's voice awakened in the breast of the Professor, who was then

but thirty-eight. The tones ceased, but the recollections they called forth stood vividly before his soul. Suddenly Skuldfrið struck some brilliant and spirited chords, and again her voice was heard; it was not a dreamy Northern melody that now chained the ear with its magic power, but one of the fiery songs of the South. It was a *gondolier song*. Was there any one who now remembered when *she* had sung it? When the last tones died away, she left the instrument and went to Aberney, saying in a low voice, —

“Dear Uncle, I could not sing more. My heart became so full.”

“So also with me.” The Professor’s lips touched her brow quite lightly; then he went from her.

“When do you sing in *La Dame Blanche*?” asked some one of Skuldfrið, as she stood looking out thoughtfully. Without turning her face towards the speaker, she answered in a firm voice, —

“Never,” and walked away from the questioner.

“Never, that word you have once before uttered to me, and yet you now bear the name of Dorbino,” thought Lothard.

A little while after this a servant in livery announced that a gentleman wished to see the Countess. With a captivating smile she left the saloon, whispering to Lothard in passing, —

“Now comes the surprise.”

“Some one from Russia,” thought Lothard.

When Nathalie again entered she was accompanied by an elderly gentleman, dressed entirely in black. She introduced, —

“Doctor Wagner.”

The name made a lively impression on most of the party. Lothard’s eyebrows contracted, Skuldfrið’s cheeks became somewhat paler, and Tage’s eyes flashed as if with joy.

The Doctor was not a little surprised to find here assembled those whom he had entangled in the meshes of his in-

trigues. Nathalie laughed, and with her usual audacity made some piquant remarks upon the effect the Doctor’s appearance had produced.

Wagner then approached Skuldfrið with those courteous and obliging words that are always addressed to distinguished persons. Lothard fancied that Skuldfrið’s demeanor was unusually proud while the Doctor was talking to her, and that her answer, although polite, had yet something cold and repelling.

“Why, it seems that the Doctor knew Madame Dorbino before,” exclaimed Nathalie.

“Yes, Countess, I had the honor of making Madame Dorbino’s acquaintance in Finland, when I was the physician at Kronobro.”

“Kronobro,” repeated the Countess as if she had been searching her memory.

“Kronobro used to belong to Baron Canitz,” said the Doctor to enlighten her.

“Ah!”

Nathalie did not continue the conversation further, but determined to find out from the Doctor all about Skuldfrið and Canitz. Her breast heaved with disquietude; while an instinctive feeling told her that she would never succeed in captivating Lothard, and that a secret link existed between him and Skuldfrið.

“I really believe I now experience envy and animosity for the first time in my life!” thought Nathalie, looking at Skuldfrið. “Is she not my very self, only more beautiful and engaging? I feel that I could detest her, if — if — *he* prefers her. *He* — but is he then anything to me? Yes, in this moment *all*!”

“Why are you so thoughtful, my gracious lady,” said Lothard, who approached the Countess.

“I was thinking of you.”

“A very unworthy object for the thoughts of so lovely a woman.”

“Lovely, did you say?”

“Yes, and I repeat it.”

"An empty word, Herr Baron; who loves me?"

"Most certainly he to whom you will some time give your heart."

"Are you convinced of this?"

"Fully."

"If I should now yield it to Aberney, do you believe that he would love me?"

"Yes, if he did not previously love another."

"Then you do not think me capable of conquering a rival?"

"Countess, you can make the impossible possible. You conquer wherever you are so disposed."

"Thanks! I shall remember your words; and if ever I should earnestly desire to win a heart, I hope it may become mine."

"She is jealous," thought Lothard. "Could she really be attached to Aberney?"

"Canitz has dared to say something that displeased Nathalie," thought Tage. "She is out of humor. Why can I not love her, charming being that she is? Why shall I be compelled to betray her affection, to throw my heart at Skuldfrið's feet? The one loves me, I love the other. Ah, that cursed Canitz!"

Tage threw an enraged look at his rival.

Late in the evening the party separated and returned home. When Nathalie's carriage stopped before her door and Lothard took leave of the ladies after assisting them to alight, he said to Skuldfrið quite softly, —

"You will not receive any myrtle with a black ribbon to-night."

"I know it," answered Skuldfrið. "For me no myrtle longer blooms."

"No, that is true, you are a widow."

After a night of torment, Tage greeted the morning with gloomy looks. The trip to the country had increased his passion for Skuldfrið in the same measure that it had stimulated his jealousy. The pleasure which his imagined

conquest of Nathalie had given his vanity was gone, and with passionate impatience he awaited the day to rush precipitately into Skuldfrið's presence and in the name of love and honor demand her hand. He must, at whatever price, purchase the right to step between her and this hated rival. She should become his, even if he were obliged to force her to the fulfilment of the promise her mother and she had once given him. Rather death, both for Skuldfrið and him, than to survive the moment when Lothard became the possessor of the woman he loved to insanity. So ran Tage's thoughts, while the fierce tumult of his feelings kept him awake. The morning came, and with it the renewed determination to have his fate decided.

He was just dressing himself when the Professor's old servant came to him with a letter. It was a rose-colored, perfumed, and dainty little billet, whose whole appearance indicated that it came from a lady. The careful and beautiful handwriting showed that a woman of culture had held the pen.

Tage opened it immediately. However down-hearted a young Lieutenant may be, he is always interested at the sight of a letter which suggests that the hand which wrote it is beautiful. The coquettish little note contained the following: —

"DEAR LIEUTENANT ABERNEY: From the eyes of a tender friend it is vain to attempt to conceal anything belonging to the heart's world. I know your secret, although you have kept it from me; perhaps you have been silent because you guessed mine. Visit me to-day at noon, and I will as your best friend endeavor to advise you in regard to your happiness, and in so doing entirely forget what your felicity will cost
"NATHALIE."

O, height of female strategy! How well did not Nathalie know the instru-

ment upon which she played. Man's heart is in general a singular combination of nobility and baseness. Magnanimity associates quite amicably with littleness; the meanest vanity goes hand in hand with the most all-embracing ambition. Nathalie was aware of this, and consequently knew how at once to flatter and excite Tage's vanity, thus usurping through her feigned regard a great power over his fickle and passionate soul. The friendship of a fascinating woman is a means by which she acquires a sure influence over a young man. Why? Because friendship does not bind to anything. It is not, like love, a usurer who demands a hundred per cent. No, friendship seldom asks anything in exchange, and is on the whole a great spendthrift. A woman's friendship is always something that at once flatters, pleases, and calms man. It affords tenderness, without his being obliged to sacrifice any of it to the fair giver. Man's egotism is always best regaled when he can take, without having to give anything. So was it with Tage; he felt something like peace and comfort after the perusal of this little note. This Nathalie, so courted, so praised and admired, she spoke to him of her affection, she called herself his tender friend; she hinted that his happiness with another could give her pain. Tage threw a look in the glass and found that he, in spite of his sleepless night, was quite a good-looking fellow, and this appearance entitled him to such a conquest.

Well then, if he had succeeded in inspiring Nathalie with love for him, why should he not be able to revive the sincere regard that Skuldfrid had for him as a child? Hope again smiled, self-confidence again whispered a multitude of flattering promises to his heart; and when, after a careful toilet, he went to the Countess, his expression was no longer downcast, but his eyes shone with reliance.

Tage found Nathalie in a charming boudoir, attired in a simple but tasteful morning-dress. When he entered, she offered him her hand with a winning smile, pensive and full of tenderness, saying, —

"Welcome, faithless knight, who does not deserve one's interest. You are ungrateful, and ought to be left to the mercy of fate."

Tage seized her hand and kissed it with an ardor that was not simulated. He was, alas! a too willing slave to the moment's impression, to be able to act otherwise than in accordance with its dictates.

"In what respect, Countess, have I trespassed against you?" said Tage, seating himself in an easy-chair that he had drawn quite near the sofa, upon which the captivating woman was sitting.

"And you can ask that?" Nathalie looked at him with well-feigned earnestness. "How many times have you told me during these two years that you loved me! How many epistles have you not written, in which you say that I am the only star left in the firmament of your life, and that you adored me!"

Tage looked a little embarrassed. Nathalie continued, —

"Did you mean what you wrote? Did you feel what your words expressed? Lieutenant Aberney, answer me frankly and honestly, as it behooves a man. Were you trifling with me?"

"No, Countess, I was not trifling."

"You were then in earnest; it was the truth that you loved me?"

"Truth at the moment I said it," replied Tage, who perceived very plainly that it was best to speak honestly.

"You thus intended to decoy my heart for the gratification of the moment, and after you had succeeded, leave it, as a plaything that no longer amused you." The Countess bowed her head and hid her face in her hands. It seemed as if

she was weeping. Tage's situation was anything but agreeable, especially as Nathalie seemed to be Skuldfrid's best friend. Besides, to see the woman who had so long been the object of his attention weeping in that way was something that completely disconcerted him. These tears told him that he had gained the prize for which he had so eagerly striven. That it no longer possessed the same value as before only made his position yet more embarrassing. He bent one knee before the Countess, stammering in a perturbed voice, —

"Hear me and then judge."

"I wish to hear nothing," whispered Nathalie, and raised her bowed head, looking tenderly at Tage. "I know it all. I know that you love Madame Dorbino with your whole soul. Your happiness would be to unite your fate with hers."

Tage seized the Countess's hands and kissed them, murmuring, —

"Forgive me; but I have loved Skuldfrid since my fourteenth year."

"Does she love you?" asked Nathalie, drawing her hands away.

"Once she did; once she gave me the promise of her hand and her faith; since then we have been separated for several years, and now —"

"You fear that you have lost her heart."

"There are moments when doubt and distrust fill my soul."

"Rise." Nathalie leaned her head on her hand with a painful gesture, as if she was not able to hold it up. "I have surmised your secret ever since I saw you with Frida the first time. Yesterday it was perfectly clear to me." Nathalie sighed. "The discovery was painful; I had believed in your love, and was happy in my trust. Hush, do not interrupt me. When we have lost the hope of our own happiness, it only remains to promote that of the one who has robbed us of it; therefore I offer you my aid in the

furtherance of your suit. I am now your ally, since you have deprived me of the joy of constituting your happiness." The Countess's eyes were veiled as if by tears.

Some questions now followed from Nathalie's side with regard to the condition between him and Skuldfrid, and as to whether any declaration had yet taken place, etc. Tage confided to her all that concerned the present, but concealed all that had reference to the past and the rôle Lothard had played in Skuldfrid's life. He did not once mention his rival's name, nor allude to him in any way. He spoke exclusively of what had occurred between Skuldfrid and him since her arrival in Sweden; he told Nathalie of his attempt to persuade her to leave the stage, and that he did not wish to claim the fulfilment of her promise until she had had time, through a longer intercourse with him, to recall their former affection for each other. Nathalie listened attentively, but when he mentioned in conclusion that at the receipt of Nathalie's letter he was firmly resolved to go to Skuldfrid and have his fate decided, the Countess interrupted him quickly and said, —

"You would by so doing spoil it all. A precipitate proposal would only remove you from Skuldfrid. No, your resolution to endeavor in the first place to revive her affection is more correct. I will work for you in the mean time. You will yet, ungrateful boy, owe me thanks for your happiness."

Their conversation lasted a short time longer, and when Tage took his departure he regarded Nathalie as his good angel. His affection for her was now considerably greater and more real than before.

Lamaratine says, I do not know where, —

"Through devotion and goodness woman conquers our hearts; through beauty and talent she only intoxicates our senses.

The beautiful and gifted women must appear devoted and good, if they wish to rule over us with the power of love."

We believe that Lamartine is right. Nathalie at least had gained more through the rôle she now performed than through all she had hitherto played. She had gained Tage's respect, admiration, and affection. Should she be able to keep this gain? Yes, so long as he believed in what she appeared to be.

A short time after the country trip one of those days came in which people seem seized with an absolute rage to make life as disagreeable as possible to each other. Aunt Sara woke with the resolution of going to Skuldfrið and talking reason to her about theatrical life. Had she not again heard the most dreadful reports? Lady G——, Mademoiselle D——, and Fru F—— had all in their turn, contributed to inform Sara that Madame Dorbino had led a more than dubious life, and that it was only her relationship with Countess Renstein which sustained her somewhat in public esteem and enabled her to be invited in aristocratic circles, etc. In short, Sara dressed herself and set off quite early for Skuldfrið's home, before Aberney had yet been seen.

"Madame, an elderly lady wishes to see you," said Anaise, sticking her head in through the door of Skuldfrið's cabinet.

"What is her name?" asked Skuldfrið without looking up.

"Mademoiselle Hederman."

"Aunt Sara!" Skuldfrið rose immediately and laid aside her writing. "Ask her to walk in."

"What happy chance have I to thank for the pleasure of seeing Aunt Sara in my home?" exclaimed Skuldfrið, smiling, as she went to meet the old lady.

"My affection brings me here," re-

plied Sara, who, notwithstanding her great resolution to be severe, could not refrain from smiling at the "pretty child," who to-day appeared more beautiful than ever.

"Come and sit down, dear Aunt. I am so glad that you could at last make up your mind to enter the abode of a singer." Skuldfrið raised her finger threateningly. "It was very bad indeed of you to say that you would not cross my threshold so long as I was an actress."

"That was perfectly right," retorted Sara sharply, "and the only reason that I have come here is because I have firmly decided that you shall not continue to be a theatre person." The old lady spoke with so much energy that her head shook.

"So you intend to wage battle," exclaimed Skuldfrið merrily; "but it is not chivalrous to attack an adversary without any preparation. Just think if you had taken me so unawares that I laid down my sword."

Sara stared at Skuldfrið a moment, perfectly confounded by her merriment. Usually, when she made her small attacks, Skuldfrið either said nothing at all or answered her in a cold and repelling tone.

"You are jesting," resumed Sara, "but I will tell you that I have not come here to joke, but to speak in downright earnest and demand an account of the life you have led."

"What is there in my life to render account for?" Skuldfrið still smiled quite mischievously.

"Can you ask what it is?" Aunt Sara smoothed and straightened her dress. "Are you not separated from your husband? Have you not since then suffered yourself to deviate from the right path?"

Skuldfrið burst into a ringing laugh.

"What in Heaven's name are you saying? Am I separated from my hus-

band —" Skuldfrið could not continue for laughing.

O, height of frivolity! Such behavior could have irritated a more meek and gentle mind than Sara's, and she accordingly exclaimed in a voice trembling with indignation, —

"Enoch Aberney's daughter guards her honor in such a way that she laughs at the disgraceful things that are said about her. But you owe more respect to your father's name, and you ought never to have forgotten the ineffaceable shadow your mother's crime cast over it, you —"

"Enough!" exclaimed Skuldfrið, grasping Sara's arm violently. The young woman was deadly pale, her whole frame shook, and she said in a voice that had something hollow: "Do not pronounce *my mother's name*; never mention her, unless you wish to drive me into exile." Skuldfrið put her hands to her head, murmuring with anguish: "O merciful Father, shall not even her ashes be allowed to repose in peace; has she then not expiated her wrong by so many and bitter sufferings!"

Skuldfrið now raised her bowed head proudly, adding: "Aunt Sara, Harmen Aberney's daughter knows that she ought to stand guiltless before God so that she may atone in part for her mother's transgression, but she knows equally well that she has not been guilty of any wrong, that her life is pure and spotless as the day. With this consciousness she considers herself entitled to the right of deciding for herself about the future. And now, Aunt Sara, we will leave this subject."

"Monsieur Aberney," announced Anaise, and again the worthy Frenchwoman's head appeared at the door.

"He is welcome," replied Skuldfrið, coldly and shortly.

Aunt Sara had felt a little quake at the name of Aberney. She was afraid that it was Victor, and then it might have been very annoying if he found out

what she had just been saying; but her apprehensions soon vanished when Tage entered. After he had greeted Skuldfrið, throwing a dissatisfied glance at Aunt Sara who was ensconced on the sofa, he said, turning to the latter, —

"Have you anything especial to say to Skuldfrið, Aunt Sara? If so, I will leave and come again when you ladies have finished speaking."

"What I had to say Skuldfrið does not seem disposed to hear; therefore, it would be wisest for me to take my leave." Sara rose. "You will not listen to sensible advice," added she looking at Skuldfrið, who, pale and cold, stood before her.

"Not now," answered Skuldfrið. "The words you have uttered still pain me here." Skuldfrið laid her hand on her heart.

"You do not consider what I must feel when —"

"Aunt Sara, say nothing more. Do not draw the bow any tighter."

Skuldfrið's manner was such that Aunt Sara found it most advisable to take her departure.

Tage had come to propose to Skuldfrið to take a walk; but she declined the invitation, declaring that she needed to be alone. Skuldfrið received no one for the whole day, but remained shut up in her room.

When Tage came down from Skuldfrið's apartments, he met Lothard at the entrance. The latter looked after him and thought, —

"He comes from her: if Nathalie should have been right. Impossible, fate could not so dreadfully plunder me of happiness, trust, and hope." He rang Nathalie's bell.

While Aunt Sara was preparing to visit Skuldfrið and deliver her moral lecture, Nathalie had despatched two

notes : one to Dr. Wagner, containing these words :—

“HERR DOCTOR : As soon as you receive this call on

“NATHALIE RENSTEIN.”

The other was to Lothard, and ran thus :—

“HERR BARON : If your time permits, then visit me to-day in the forenoon. You will find me at home about one o'clock. With all respect,

“NATHALIE RENSTEIN.”

The Doctor's note reached him just as he was intending to go out, and the result was that he immediately directed his course to the Countess's house.

When Nathalie had sent off the two notes, she began to walk back and forth in her library. Her appearance was disturbed, her cheeks pale, and her eyes were alternately veiled with melancholy or flashing with indignation. After she had walked for a time, she stopped before a mirror, contemplating her own image and holding the following soliloquy in thought :—

“Can it be possible that I who have for so many years disbelieved in love, laughing at the fools who threw themselves at my feet, and carelessly playing with their hearts, have now in my turn become a victim to this miserable epidemic and attached my feelings to a man, — one of these lords of creation, who regarded more closely, resemble puppets? We beautiful women have but to pull the wires and we make both heroes and men of genius, great men and pygmies, dance according to our caprice or lower themselves to be our slaves. That I should love such a shell of a *man*, without anything to testify that he is *one*, except the name! Ah! that would be degrading. Is *he* really like *others*? No. He has not made himself the slave of any woman, and it is this that enchants me. But how do I know that? This indiffer-

ence, this superiority, may be feigned, and may cover a heart as weak as all the rest. For two years he has amused, interested, provoked, and tormented me, but has never put my whole soul in a tumult as at present. Tumult, yes, that is the right word. Resentment, anger, and bitterness is what I feel, and nothing else. My pride cannot tolerate it that he should be the only one to resist me. I endured it so long as I believed him to be invulnerable, but now —”

“Doctor Wagner,” announced a servant. The Doctor entered.

“Welcome, Doctor, I have been waiting for you impatiently,” said Nathalie.

“Are you ill, Countess?” inquired Wagner, with a subtle smile, and taking the little hand he laid his finger on her pulse. “Your pulse is nearly a hundred per minute. You have a fever.”

“Possibly I have; that is the reason I have sent for you, but leave my fever for the present.” The Countess took a seat and made a gesture to the Doctor to do the same.

“Do you remember our first acquaintance?” began Nathalie.

“On board the frigate *Carolina*. Very well indeed. I had the honor of being the Count's physician during the voyage.”

“It is over two years since then, and during that time you have resided in Sweden.”

“Yes, and last summer I had the pleasure of meeting you in *Skåne* at Count —, during your visit with the noble family.”

“I was sick and you cured me.”

“What is her intention in repeating things that I know,” thought the Doctor. “I shall have to make a little direct attack to find out what she has in view.” Aloud he said, —

“Your illness was only a consequence of low spirits; but it was quite different with young *Aberney*. He was on the point of losing his life to save — your glove.”

"Do not remind me of all the follies he committed at that time," said Nathalie, impatiently.

"It does not concern him," thought the Doctor.

"When did you arrive in Stockholm?" asked the Countess, changing the theme abruptly.

"About a month ago."

"How long do you remain here?"

"Either for good, or I leave Sweden never to return."

"Why did you not let me know before that you were here?"

"She enters upon a formal examination with me," thought the Doctor. "She has some difficulty in coming to the subject." He replied, —

"Because my time was occupied with business. Besides, my dear Countess, I heard that you were well and not in need of me as a physician. I had your words of last summer in lively remembrance."

"Ah! I know. They were these: 'Come and live in the Capitol and you shall be my physician.' From this day you will become so; that is the reason why I have sent for you. I am sick."

The Doctor made a bow that could have been interpreted thus: If you say so, I must believe it.

"Understand me rightly, I am so provoked that I feel indisposed."

"Can I do anything to relieve your vexation?"

"You can gratify my curiosity."

"Ah!"

"You know Madame Dorbino. Where and how did you become acquainted with her?"

"At last we have come to the subject," thought the Doctor. "See to it, Wagner, that you do not betray anything before you have learned the motives that actuate this artful woman." He said aloud with a reserved mien, —

"Countess, I told you at my meeting

with Madame Dorbino that I had become acquainted with her in Finland."

"Before she was married?"

"Yes, you know yourself that she lived in England and France after her marriage."

"Where or at whose house did you make her acquaintance?"

"At her mother's."

"Was her mother called Aberney?"

The Doctor made an affirmative bow and assumed his most reticent manner.

"Frankness is not his weak side," thought Nathalie, with inward impatience. "I must change my plan of attack."

"Thanks for the information. My distinguished relative is so reserved, that I never hear her speak of her past life. I do not yet know how nearly related she is to the Professor, but only that she belongs to the Aberney family, and I supposed she bore that name before she was married." The Countess leaned back against the sofa and said with apparent indifference, —

"You have resided in Finland quite a long time, and if I am not mistaken in the vicinity of Abo."

"Both there and in Helsingfors."

"What a strange people the Finns are!" Nathalie spoke at length about the Finnish people, the last war, and the conditions in the country. The Doctor entered into the conversation with a certain caution and gave close heed to every word of the Countess, but without letting her perceive it. After Nathalie had spoken of some families of rank in Finland that she knew, she said quite carelessly, —

"Has not Baron Canitz a large estate there?"

"It is then about Canitz that she wants to know something," thought the Doctor. "The Baron formerly owned an estate there," said he, "but he has been obliged to sell it."

"Was there not a family by the name of Smidt in the neighborhood?"

"Countess, there are many families in Finland of that name."

"Doctor," exclaimed Nathalie, half jesting, half impatient, "you give me only evasive answers."

"That is because you ask me such singular questions." The Doctor looked at the young woman with a penetrating glance as he added with emphasis: "You desire to know of me something concerning Canitz, but you want to find it out without exposing the motive which lies at the base of your inquiries. Why not rather ask me frankly?"

"I distrust you. You are a very crafty and dangerous man."

"Countess, I venture quite humbly to declare that I have the same opinion about you." The Doctor bowed.

"Well, then, if that is so, we shall not be likely to outwit each other." Nathalie laughed.

"That would be impossible; there is only one way for us, and that is for each to trust to the mercy of the other and play honest. What do you wish to know of me?"

"I want to know if you are acquainted with a certain Mademoiselle Smidt from Finland?"

"I am."

"Has Baron Canitz been in love with her?"

"Yes."

"Where does she live at present?"

"Here."

"In Stockholm?"

"Yes."

"I must know where."

"You shall; but I must first possess your confidence, and you must tell me whether you are attached to Baron Canitz."

"Doctor, you overstep the limits of punctilio."

"In that case I will fall back and have nothing to say either about Mad-

emoiselle Smidt, Baron Canitz, or Madame Dorbino."

Nathalie said nothing. The Doctor continued after a moment, —

"I am the *only person* who can give any information in regard to them; so, Countess, if you desire frankness from me, you must set me a good example. Do you love or hate Canitz, that is the point that I must have clear."

"I detest Baron Canitz."

"That is to say, you love him," fell in the Doctor, smiling. "What is your design, what object have you with your detestation?"

"To humiliate him."

"I understand; to bring him to your feet. Countess, that is difficult, if not downright impossible."

"Nothing is impossible," rejoined Nathalie quickly.

"I fear, however, that it will be so in this case. I know Canitz: he does not change feelings."

"Well, then, he ought to take care of himself. I shall never forgive him if he disregards me."

"For six years he has been attached to a person that he will love until his death. There is but one means of drawing him from this foolish love."

"And that is?"

"To ruin her in his esteem; and that is no easy matter. She is chaste and pure as a *vestal*."

"And this vestal, who is she?"

"Mademoiselle Smidt."

"Where find her?"

"In this house."

"Doctor?"

"Madame Dorbino and Mademoiselle Smidt are one and the same person."

"O, my suspicion!"

"Baron Canitz wishes to see the Countess," announced the servant.

"You look agitated, Madame," said the Doctor in French.

"I am sick." Nathalie threw herself

back on the sofa, saying to the servant :
"Ask the Baron to walk in."

Wagner seized the Countess's arm as if to examine her pulse, and when Lothard entered he heard the Doctor say, —

"I shall inform myself in the morning if my prescription has proved beneficial and your condition improved." He rose, bowed politely to Nathalie, saluted Lothard, and then left the room.

"You are indisposed, Countess," said Lothard as soon as they were alone; "perhaps my presence will annoy you?"

"Have I not asked you to come?" replied Nathalie, whose voice was somewhat trembling.

"I have obeyed your call as you see."

"My intention was to make a requisition upon your politeness." Nathalie leaned her head on one side à la Skuldfrið and smiled at Lothard, who at this movement frowned almost imperceptibly. He replied however in an obliging tone, —

"You may command me."

"On Monday *La Dame Blanche* will be given; I intended to ask you to give up your box to me that evening. You have secured it for every time that Madame Dorbino appears."

"I will resign it to you with pleasure. I did not make use of it the evening previous to the last."

"Indeed! But you have intended to use it when *La Dame Blanche* was performed?" She looked at him.

"I scarcely think so; and in any case, Countess, it is now out of the question. If I wish to hear *La Dame Blanche*, I can always find a place in some part of the house. Is there anything further that you desire?"

"Yes!" Nathalie reached him her hand with an almost beseeching look. The most distinguished actress could

not have played her part better. "I wish that you would afford me and the Russian Minister's wife the pleasure of your company on that evening. You know that Countess P—— is in delicate health. She has not ventured to attend the opera on any previous evening. She therefore asked me to procure her a box in the first tier. I promised her this as well as to go with her. But you see the Countess is exceedingly tiresome; come therefore and help me to drag out the long intervals between the acts. You will then perform two good deeds, — cheer up the sick woman, whose favorite you are, and divert me."

Lothard's brow darkened. Nathalie had prepared a regular ambuscade; she first ascertained whether he intended to go to the opera or not, and then made it impossible for him to refuse.

"When *La Dame Blanche* is performed," answered Lothard, "I will have the honor of accompanying you ladies."

"I thank you, Baron; and now a word in conclusion. I hope you will forgive me for amusing myself during the last two years in letting you believe that I knew Mademoiselle Smidt. I now regret this prank, and frankly confess that she is entirely unknown to me."

"I believe, Countess, that she has been so; but I am now fully and firmly convinced that you know the person who has borne this name."

"What a supposition! Upon what do you base it?"

"On my knowledge of you. You are never more dangerous than when you are gentle. Wisdom then bids one be on his guard."

"Dangerous, what do you mean by that?"

"Those are dangerous who believe themselves capable of wounding."

"And this you say to me?"

"Yes, Countess Renstein, just to you; for behind the open acknowledgment that you did not know Mademoiselle

Smidt, you conceal your knowledge of who she is. You know *now* that Madame Dorbino bore that name. Dr. Wagner has informed you of it. You also know that the only woman to whom I have rendered all my admiration and esteem is Skuldfrid Smidt. Now since I have myself confirmed this, you must certainly perceive that any further words upon this subject would be out of place."

There is nothing which so takes an intriguing character by surprise as a candid expression of the truth. Nathalie was completely disconcerted by it. She was, however, too skilful an actress to let her surprise or chagrin be perceived. She therefore said, laughing, —

"You have disarmed me, Baron, and that so thoroughly that you have deprived me of all my weapons. With what shall I hereafter attack you?"

"With your charming gayety, your wit, and your talent," said Lothard politely. "In these you possess weapons of which you can never be deprived. You are so richly endowed that you will always remain a woman dangerous to our hearts."

"Ah, I am not particularly dangerous." Nathalie sighed. "Never have I been so to you."

"You are so to all whom you desire to please."

"But that is an evasive answer."

"Not at all. I meant to say by it, that you had not honored me with anything but your disfavor. You have not considered me worth pleasing."

Did Nathalie comprehend the inner meaning of this reply? We think she did, for she changed color slightly.

"You are right, and you will certainly never become the object of my coquetry. After this declaration we ought to give each other the hand as friends."

"My gracious Countess, I assure you that it can never enter my mind to be other than a chivalrous friend to ladies

in general, and the lovely ones in particular." Lothard lifted the Countess's hand to his lips and then took his leave.

"Ah! the presumptuous mortal, he will not even have my friendship; but he will yet have to repent it," muttered Nathalie.

In the evening of the same day, when Lothard went home, he threw himself upon a sofa to read the newspapers. He opened one with the most uninterested air in the world. He cast his eyes quite mechanically over the first page and the announcements of amusements. The following was printed in italics, —

"Wednesday's representation of *La Dame Blanche* is postponed on account of Madame Dorbino's hoarseness."

Lothard sprang up, exclaiming, —

"What does that mean? Is she hoarse or —" He threw himself back on the sofa and turned over the paper to see if there was anything that threw any further light on the subject. There was actually a long notice regretting the loss the public were compelled to sustain in not being able to hear Madame Dorbino in *La Dame Blanche*. It was hoped however that her hoarseness was merely accidental, and that in a week's time they might again have the pleasure of hearing her beautiful voice.

"So it is only a respite," thought Lothard, throwing down the paper. At the same time his eyes fell upon a letter that lay on the table. The first glance at it made him start. He opened it quickly, reading these lines, —

"Madame Dorbino is not hoarse, she will never appear in *La Dame Blanche*."

There was no name, nor was any needed; Lothard would have recognized this handwriting among a hundred. Had this little paper contained an appointment to the highest post of honor, it could not have called forth a truer joy

than that which he now experienced. Every feature of Lothard's face reflected a happiness and satisfaction that rendered it actually handsome. A few minutes afterwards he left the house.

Skuldfrið had spent the afternoon at Drottningholm in company with Aberney. She came home somewhat late in the evening; Anaise then handed her a bouquet of myrtle and immortelles, tied with a rose-colored ribbon; a slip of paper was placed in their midst. Skuldfrið carried the bouquet to her lips with a radiant smile and whispered as she unfolded the little billet, —

"*He* has understood me." Then she cast her eyes upon the paper; it contained but a single word, and that was, —

"Thanks!"

"Ah! So his wounded self-love demands that I shall prove to him how infinitely dear he is to me. Yes, prove it I shall; but he will not obtain the triumph of having me lay my heart in his hand as a gift. No, Lothard; this heart deserves that you should sacrifice something of your pride for its possession. I know that he loves me. His cold, his bitter words have only shown me that he would conceal the warm and strong feelings that attach him to me." The bouquet was again caressed and again she smiled at it with that expression of hope and trust which only they who love can experience.

When Aberney came home he met Tage in the saloon with a paper in his hand. As soon as he saw the Professor he exclaimed, —

"Papa, have you read the news this evening?"

"No, I have just come from Drottningholm. Skuldfrið and I have been there the whole afternoon."

"Why did you not allow me to go with you?"

"You said that you were engaged, when I asked you."

"I did not know then —"

"That Skuldfrið was going with me." Aberney smiled. "Well, why did you wish to know if I had read the evening paper?"

"One more question, papa."

"Certainly."

"Was Skuldfrið troubled with hoarseness to-day? Did she speak of it to you?"

"Not in the least; she sang at my request several people's songs, before we went to Drottningholm. Her voice was clear, full, and charming as ever."

"O good God, let me not become wild with delight!" exclaimed Tage, with a tone and expression of countenance that revealed the most intense joy.

"May I be allowed to know what it is all about?" inquired Aberney.

"Has Skuldfrið said nothing in regard to *La Dame Blanche* on Monday?"

"Not a word. But it is high time that you finished your interrogations, and informed me instead as to what you mean."

"Read, and you will find the explanation." Tage handed him the paper.

"That is very singular," said Aberney after he had glanced through the notice about Madame Dorbino. Skuldfrið was not hoarse in the least, and made no mention of the postponement of *La Dame Blanche*. I do not understand this."

"But I do!" exclaimed Tage joyously.

"Then you ought to inform me."

The Professor seated himself on the sofa.

"Skuldfrið has pretended hoarseness in order to withdraw from the stage."

"Where do you find the cause of this action?"

"In her affection for me."

"Childish illusions, my dear Tage. I do not doubt that Skuldfrið thinks much of you; but it is not of the nature to induce her to make any such sacrifice. I have warned you several times not to overestimate it."

"But now I have well-founded reasons for believing that her friendship is of a more tender character than you suppose. It is I who have prevailed upon her to leave the stage. I have spoken to Skuldfrið about it. I have represented the dangers to which she exposes herself, and I have conjured her in the name of our childhood's attachment to abandon a career which will sooner or later bring her into trouble."

"Well, what did she say in reply?" asked Aberney, looking thoughtfully before him.

"She turned it all off with a jest; but that you know is Skuldfrið's habit. She treats everything in a sportive way and makes merry with even the most serious things. Therefore it is not her words, but her acts, that ought to speak."

"I think however that you ought not to attach too much weight to this act of hers. She has not by any means signified through this that she intends to leave the stage; and even if she had, I fear that this step does not proceed from her desire of doing as you wished, but from very different motives."

"And what are they?"

"Could there not be some other person who also felt an antipathy to her artistic career, and for whom she has made this sacrifice?"

"Who could that other be?"

"I," said a voice behind Tage. It was Sara, who, faithful to an old habit, had been listening to what was said in the saloon.

"You, Aunt Sara!" exclaimed Aberney and Tage both at once.

"Yes, just I," replied Sara. "You are astonished at it, because you two never care for what I say, and think all others like yourself; but mind you, that is not the case. Skuldfrið has now given evidence that she has true confidence and respect for me. It was I who spoke with her in all seriousness, showing her that she owed it to the memory

of her parents to abandon such a sinful career as the one she has chosen. With her warm and good heart Skuldfrið has acted in accordance with the advice I gave her; she has now proven it."

Aberney rose and said with a smile, —

"Blessed are they who believe. This holds good for Aunt Sara and Tage. You both entertain the conviction that you have influenced Skuldfrið. I could venture my honor that neither of you have had any share in her decision. He who lives to see will learn which of us three is right!"

"I suppose you mean to take the merit of it yourself," retorted Sara with spirit. "How could anything reasonable be accomplished, unless you had your finger in it!"

"At least nothing sensible occurs in my house when I am not by," answered Aberney, laughing. "As far as Skuldfrið is concerned, I have never tried to persuade her to quit the stage. Good night."

Tage did not attach the least weight to Aberney's words. He only regarded them as an ordinary pedantic sermon from an old man to a young one. As to Aunt Sara, his thoughts did not for an instant dwell on the possibility of her having any influence over Skuldfrið. No, it was he alone, Tage, who had prevailed upon Skuldfrið to renounce these triumphs to her vanity, and now, when he had obtained this proof of her tenderness, he considered all delay unnecessary. The morning should witness the confirmation of the happiness he had so long dreamed of.

"Before he retired Tage wrote the following letter: —

"MY NOBLE FRIEND: You who have treated me with so much kindness, and manifested such a lively interest in all that pertains to my happiness, will

undoubtedly find it natural that I should hasten to inform you that I now stand at the goal of my desires.

"Countess, Skuldfrid loves me! She has this evening proven it to me. I am the happiest mortal upon the earth. To-morrow she is mine before the whole world.

"Dear, adorable Countess, forgive me my felicity and that I can be happy in possessing any other's love than yours. Take away Skuldfrid and my childhood at her side, and the earth would not contain any woman so worthy of being loved as you. It must surely be you who have so influenced Skuldfrid that she hastens to give me this tangible evidence of her love.

"Adieu, thou creator of my happiness! To-morrow you shall see at your feet your grateful slave,

"TAGE ABERNEY."

When Nathalie awoke the next morning Tage's letter was handed her; it had been left with her porter late the evening before. When she had glanced through it she started up with a cry of joy. She dressed herself in great haste and sent for Dr. Wagner.

He presented himself without delay. When he entered Nathalie's boudoir he was received by her with an affable but reserved smile. The Countess had made up her mind to possess the Doctor's confidence and to find out why he worked against Skuldfrid and Lothard's attachment. She was too artful and calculating to believe that any one could act without being led by selfish motives.

The Doctor, a keen observer, remarked the Countess's reserved mien, and understood immediately that it covered some attack, against which he ought to be on his guard.

"You have sent for me, Countess," said he. "Are you *again* indisposed?" These words were uttered with a certain irony.

"No, Doctor, I only desired to inform you that I am now completely recovered."

"Indeed!" The Doctor laid his forefinger on her pulse and looked at her fixedly. "Allow me to dispute this. Your pulse is still too quick for me to dare to pronounce you well. You are suffering from a violent inflammation."

"Do you think so?" The Countess smiled with a certain presumption. "If so I have a cooling remedy at command." Nathalie disclosed a paper which she held folded. "But that which can dispel my ills may possibly increase yours." Nathalie laid the forefinger of her right hand on the Doctor's pulse, imitating him. "You are suffering from a violent inflammation."

"That is perfectly true," rejoined Wagner; "but however skilful you may be, my gracious Countess, in discovering the evil, I fear you will not be able to discover its cause. I, on the contrary, know that yours has its root in the heart. From what does my illness start, can you tell me that?" The Doctor's face was so cheerful and smiling, that Nathalie tried in vain to penetrate the subtle and mobile mask which concealed his dark and wily disposition.

"I do not feel at all inclined for such a herculean task as to fathom you. You have covered yourself with such a smooth and impenetrable exterior, that I should never succeed in getting hold of you without your assistance. It is this which I now intend to prevail upon you to lend me."

"You believe very firmly in your power over us men."

"As far as you are concerned I only believe in my finesse."

"Do you intend to measure it with mine? Then, Countess, I consider myself already vanquished."

"Hypocrite! You mean rather to say that I shall not succeed. Let us leave all controversy. In an hour Baron

Canitz will be here. He must not meet you. I wish to know what degree of affection you cherish for the Baron?"

"What degree?" repeated the Doctor, looking at the ceiling. "That would be difficult to estimate."

"See here, Doctor, let us have no more twisting of words," exclaimed Nathalie impatiently. "Answer me briefly and fairly: have you any friendship for Canitz?"

"A good deal, Countess. Have I not been his teacher?"

"Then we have nothing to say to each other. I neither can nor will confide to the Baron's friend and teacher a matter that involves a painful blow to Canitz." The Countess rose, adding: "You must excuse me for troubling you; but I believed that you for some reason were hostile to Canitz, and if so I should have had something to impart to you in confidence."

"Curse the woman," muttered the Doctor mentally. "She is almost as shrewd as I. Nothing remains for me but to let her into the secret of my hatred."

"Adieu, Doctor," continued Nathalie, after a short pause. "I must make my toilet before the Baron arrives." She went towards the door.

"A few words, out of grace, Countess," exclaimed the Doctor, who had also risen and approached her. "You have misunderstood me."

"No, Doctor, I have, on the contrary, understood you perfectly. I now say to you, that before you have told me what interest you have in wishing to separate Skuldfrið and Canitz, you shall not be informed of the blow which within an hour's time shall reach the Baron."

"Well then, Countess, my friendship for the Baron very much resembles the reverse. I have reasons for not desiring his welfare."

"And these, what are they?"

"I neither can nor will tell them to you. You must be satisfied when I de-

clare that everything which can favor Baron Canitz's happiness is hateful to me. Cost what it will, I shall try to change his happiness into misery, his joy into grief. Are you content with this explanation, the only one I can give you?"

"Perfectly! Read this." Nathalie handed the Doctor Tage's letter.

"What use do you intend to make of this!" inquired the Doctor when he returned it.

"I have asked the Baron to come here. He shall read this letter."

"The last lines too?"

"Yes, what matter; he may think that I am attached to Aberney, it suits my plan perfectly."

"Good! Allow me now one question: why did you make me a confidant of this!"

"Because you must give me some information. I wish to know in what relation young Aberney and Skuldfrið stand to each other, and whether Canitz considers Aberney as his rival, etc. I have been careful not to question the latter so as to prevent the suspicion that I have any other interest than Tage's happiness."

Half an hour later Baron Canitz was announced.

"It is the second time within two days that you have received a note from me requesting a call," said Nathalie. "Has this not astonished you?"

"Countess, nothing that comes from a beautiful woman astonishes me."

"What do you think is the reason that I now desire to see you?"

"I have obeyed the summons, without presuming to guess the occasion of it."

"You have seen, I suppose, that *La Dame Blanche* has been postponed?"

"Yes. Madame Dorbino's hoarseness will probably soon be over, and then my box is always at your disposal."

"But this is not the reason why I wished to speak with you."

"I did not suppose it was."

"Madame Dorbino is not hoarse," resumed the Countess. "I heard her singing yesterday up in her room with a full and clear voice."

"Then she must have pretended hoarseness," answered Lothard coldly; "but you could not have sent for me merely to tell me of this."

"Not exactly, but in a certain sense. Do you know, Baron, I suspect that Frida intends to leave the stage."

"Have you any reason for this apprehension?"

"Yes; but we will speak of this by and by. Do you recollect that I told you a few days ago that Frida was on the point of becoming engaged?"

"Yes, I remember that you said something of the kind."

"You did not believe my words."

"At this moment I am still more incredulous," replied Lothard, smiling.

Nathalie observed with surprise that Lothard's face no longer wore the expression of coldness and indifference that usually distinguished it. The blood's warm current had diffused color and life into every feature.

"What a pity it is that I should be the one to shake your conviction. We women do not like to be accused of spreading false reports, and upon this ground I consider myself entitled to corroborate my words. Therefore be so kind as to read this."

Nathalie handed Lothard the letter which Tage had written. With visible reluctance Lothard took it and glanced it through. A quick motion of the eyebrows, a sudden paleness, and an involuntary contraction of the muscles of the face indicated that its perusal had occasioned him acute pain. The Countess's eyes detected his emotion. She experienced a feeling so bitter, that she involuntarily brought her hand to her heart as she thought, —

"He loves deeply, with his whole soul. O, how I detest her!"

Lothard returned the letter, saying in a perfectly calm voice, —

"Aberney is to be congratulated, if he actually obtains Madame Dorbino's hand."

"If you say. That sounds as if you still doubted it."

"It is a fault of mine, Countess, to believe nothing but what I see. Fate is so capricious."

"Do you then not know that Tage Aberney has had the promise of Frida's hand for a long time; a promise that she seems to have given him before she left Finland?"

"In that event she is right in following the bidding of her heart and honor. Have you anything further to say to me, Countess?"

"Only that young Aberney has demanded as a condition of their union that she should leave the stage. This gave me reason to suppose that she would never more appear."

"Art sustains a loss and domestic life is the gainer." Lothard rose and took his leave.

"Ah! that man is created to make me frantic. He did not even give me the triumph of witnessing his grief. It was only the first shock of it that he could not command; but afterwards he displayed the same unheard-of indifference, the same unapproachable manner, that irritates more than the grossest affront."

When Lothard left the Countess he took his way up to Skuldfrið, thinking: "I must hear the confirmation of this from her own lips. I cannot believe that she is capable of so much duplicity. What have her written words served, if she forsook the stage to become his wife? To trifle in this abominable way with the feelings of another is not in accordance with Skuldfrið's character. If she from attachment or other motives gives

him her hand, it is not possible that she could wish to have the appearance of loving me. No, a thousand times no; it is some misunderstanding or some game that the Countess is playing me." He rang Skuldfrið's bell. *He*, who had resolved not to cross her threshold before she called him, was now prepared to forget his resolution.

Anaise opened the door.

"Is Madame Dorbino at home?" asked Lothard.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Has she any visitors?"

"Messieurs Aberney are with Madame."

Lothard's blood became like fire in his veins; it was with the greatest effort that he was able to say that he would call again. Then he hurried down the stairs, a prey to the most violent feelings. Tage's words, "To-morrow she is mine before the whole world," came back to his mind.

Father and son were then with Skuldfrið to settle the betrothal. His heart threatened to burst its confines, his pulse flew, and his blood burned. It was as if a whole hell of torture had been let loose in Lothard's soul.

In the mean time the following scene took place in Skuldfrið's room.

Tage had presented himself quite early in the morning. Skuldfrið received him more cordially than usual, and Tage saw in this friendly greeting an additional proof that she held him dear.

"Skuldfrið, I have come to thank you for not appearing in *La Dame Blanche*," began Tage in a voice so tender that its accents already interpreted what he was about to clothe in words.

"You do not owe me any thanks," assured Skuldfrið, looking at him with her honest eyes. "What *you* said against the theatre has not influenced my decision; that proceeded from quite other motives. Let us therefore say no more upon this subject."

"As you will."

Tage seized Skuldfrið's hand and folded it between both his. At this moment his heart beat with the same feelings as when he in younger years sat by her side, before his selfish desires became the ruling power. Tage fancied that he was a better man than he had been for many years. Everything appeared to him as when, he left Finland. His heart was filled with hope and trust, and he had but one desire, that of living and dying at Skuldfrið's side.

"Let me sit so a moment," whispered Tage. "Perhaps I shall never more experience the peaceful and happy feelings which now sway me. O, let me yet for a moment believe that all is as it used to be!"

Skuldfrið drew her hand away slowly, saying in a mild and earnest voice, —

"No, Tage, you must not cherish such an illusion, things are now very different."

"Only that you are not changed, then I am content."

"I am not changed, Tage; but to-day I understand the feelings that fill my heart, and that I did not formerly."

"O tell me that you hold me as dear as before." Tage looked at her and continued passionately: "The tenderness you once cherished for me cannot have died out, it must still live in your heart as well as mine. Ah, Skuldfrið, I have from boyhood loved no one but you. You alone have swayed my whole soul. To the youth you were his sweetest and most beautiful dream; to the man the object of all his longing, the source of his good and evil thoughts. I stretched out my arms after you in despair when you had disappeared; with death in my heart I feared that you loved another; and with redoubled love I now ask you: have you betrayed your first youthful fancy, your faith towards your childhood's friend? Is it possible that you have deceitfully transferred this to another? Is it possible now, when fate has brought us together again, and you perceive in

every glance, in every feature of my face, in every word from my lips, how dear you are to me, that you can close your heart to the feelings that once ruled it? Skuldfrið, speak, say that you have been faithful to the Tage to whom you once gave the promise of your hand." Tage seized both her hands, adding passionately: "You have no right to become another's."

"Tage, you must be calm and listen to me," said Skuldfrið. "Not through this passionate language, this reference to times long since fled, or these claims, can you come to a clear understanding of our relative positions. You must hear what I have to say with composure and reason. If you cannot, then, Tage, we will postpone this explanation until you become calmer."

"I will listen to you," said Tage in a smothered voice, and dropped her hands.

"Monsieur Aberney," announced Anaise.

"Ask him to walk in," replied Skuldfrið.

"Papa!" exclaimed Tage, starting to his feet, "why did he come just at this moment!" He clenched his hands with convulsive violence. Skuldfrið looked at her inconsiderate cousin in astonishment.

The Professor entered.

"Ah, are you here, my dear Tage?" said he and nodded to his son.

"Tage and I were engaged in a serious conversation," said Skuldfrið, offering the Professor her hand; "you came as if sent from Heaven to hear the explanation I have to give and then pronounce your verdict."

"Skuldfrið, what do you intend to do?" asked Tage.

"I intend to make *your father* and my best friend the judge between us. He was in your younger years the confidant of *your* feelings, and he must be so still; he may also become acquainted with all the weakness *my heart* contains."

Skuldfrið drew the Professor to the

sofa beside her, laid her clasped hands upon his shoulder as in childhood, and said in a deeply serious voice, —

"Uncle, you and I know to what a marriage without mutual love can lead. We could weep blood at the remembrance of it. You could never desire either of us, Tage or I, to enter such a union."

"No, may God preserve you!" said the Professor.

"Well then, when you and my mother, six years ago, desired that I should one day become Tage's, you considered that this would promote the happiness of both. You believed that my heart belonged to Tage. Was it not so?"

"Your mother thought so, and I hoped that when you became separated from *the one* who *then* occupied your fancy, your whole affection would concentrate upon Tage."

"Then you already suspected," exclaimed Tage, "that —"

"Silence!" said the Professor in a commanding tone. "Let Skuldfrið communicate what she has to say, and then you may talk."

"I," resumed Skuldfrið, "was at that time too much of a stranger to the world of the heart to be able rightly to judge of my own feelings. I was equally unacquainted with life and the mournful drama which is there enacted. The consequence of this was, that I only listened to two voices within me: the fervent desire to meet my mother's wishes and my hope of making Tage happy. Then I promised one day to become Tage's betrothed; but scarcely was the promise given when I repented it; I discovered that —" Skuldfrið paused. She leaned her glowing face against Aberney's shoulder. Her breast heaved with emotion. During the silence which ensued, the blood boiled like fire in Tage's veins.

"What did you discover?" asked the Professor.

"That I did not love Tage."

"Say rather that you loved another;

that you faithlessly betrayed my true heart!" exclaimed Tage, starting up.

"Resume your seat and be still," commanded the Professor. "Mark, that all reproaches are ill placed, when they are uttered by a man to the woman who honestly tells him the truth."

"Tage is right, Uncle, I actually did love another. I loved him even in the moment when I thought that I ought to despise him. He had taken my whole heart." Skuldfriid pressed her hands to her breast. "And yet I went away, fled from him and you. The veil had been torn away which covered events that occurred long since; at the sight of what it concealed I fled, trembling for the consequences of the past. Years rolled by, but neither time nor distance could efface his image. I loved him more deeply every year. The calm examination of his acts, *everything* taught me to respect more and more the man whom I thought I had the right to despise. After learning the sad marriage history which darkened the lives of so many persons and wrought so much evil, so many bitter sufferings, I made a solemn vow to God never to unite my destiny to any other than the one I loved."

"But yet you are now a widow. Did you love the man whose name you bear?" said Tage with bitterness.

"He was my benefactor; I took care of him during his illness, and received his name and the title of his wife in exchange," replied Skuldfriid earnestly.

She put her arm around Aberney's neck, adding: "Now, Uncle, just before you came, Tage told me that he still loved me, and that he desired the fulfilment of the promise I once gave. He demanded it in the name of his happiness and my honor."

"What was your answer?" asked the Professor.

"I had not yet given any answer when you came. What I have now imparted to you both is my answer. I do not

love Tage; my heart has only a sister's affection to give him. Forgive me for this, Tage," added she, and offered him her hand.

"Shall I forgive you for changing me into a miserable wretch without a future, without hope, without an aim for my existence? O Skuldfriid, I hope God may not punish you! You have in a terrible manner deceived me."

Tage rushed out of the room. Skuldfriid sprang up with the intention of hastening after him, but Aberney held her back with the words, —

"Stay! Suffering makes him unjust and bewilders his mind. To-morrow he will judge of your behavior and his own position with more calmness and sense."

"Uncle, can I act differently?"

"No, my child, you cannot. Only mutual love insures domestic happiness. When that does not exist, it is vain to hope for any felicity. Better than that, Tage now suffers from his disappointed hopes; he will some day console himself for them; nothing could compensate him for a life without love, dragged out at the side of a wife who does not care for him."

In a little while the Professor took his leave.

Never are human beings more selfish than when they are in love. All their thoughts and feelings are then concentrated upon a single — *object*. Skuldfriid forgot the painful impression of Tage's words, the feeling of sadness his grief left with her, in the thought of Lothard, and she went to caress the bouquet he had sent her the previous evening.

When Tage rushed from Skuldfriid in despair, he took his way to Nathalie. It was a half-hour after Lothard had left her. At Tage's entrance the Countess had assumed a gentle and melancholy

expression ; but this disappeared instantly when she saw him.

"What in the name of heaven has happened !" exclaimed Nathalie with undisguised amazement. She had a presentiment that it was something which would make a disagreeable impression on her also.

"She has rejected me !" exclaimed Tage. "She has declared that — that — she does not love me, that she loves another."

Tage forgot the requirements of etiquette and threw himself recklessly upon a chair with his hands before his face. At Tage's words Nathalie changed color, but with this exception preserved a perfect command over herself.

"What do you say, Lieutenant Aberney ; has Frida rejected you ? She who yesterday proved her love to you, as you wrote me, and who to-day was to become yours before the world ?"

"Ah, so I thought !"

"You thought ; then you were not convinced of it."

"Yes, fully and firmly."

"Did she tell you yesterday that her heart belonged to you, and has she to-day taken back her words ?"

Tage gave her an account of what had occurred. He wept like a child when he repeated that he had lost *her*, whom he said that he could never cease to love. Nathalie listened to him with a thoughtful mien. She forgot to pay any attention to the pitiful sight of a man, weak as a child, crying over his *own* sufferings. At last she interrupted him with, —

"Who is it that Frida loves ?"

"It is that detestable wretch, Canitz."

"I knew it," thought Nathalie, and pressed her lips together ; to Tage she said with a friendly look and a cheering smile : "All is not yet lost. I have promised you my assistance. You can count upon it."

Nathalie spoke comforting words to

Tage, who listened to her with a beam of hope, while he kissed the Countess's beautiful hands and looked inexpressibly unhappy.

Nathalie asked him to come back the next day, when she would tell him the result of her efforts in his behalf.

In the evening of the same day there was a large party at Blå Porten, given by the officers of the navy in honor of two Englishmen belonging to the British fleet. Lothard and Tage were both there as a matter of course. The company drank to their hearts' content, and the greatest hilarity prevailed. The conversation fell naturally upon women ; — that eternally new yet wellnigh exhausted theme. From women in general they began to speak of several in particular, and then the favorite musical artists became the subjects of criticism, being censured or praised according to the different views of the speakers.

"I suppose you heard Madame Dorbino when she was in London ?" said a Swedish officer to one of the Englishmen.

"Yes, I had that pleasure the last time she was in London," he replied. "She possesses a ravishing voice and rare beauty besides."

"And is, with all this, as impregnable as a well-fortified castle," remarked the other Englishman.

"Indeed ; report however seems to assert the contrary," said one of the lieutenants.

"What can report have to say about Madame Dorbino, except that she is a person of distinguished talent ?"

This was uttered with that gruff English assurance which gave one to understand that any contrary opinion was something which the Briton did not intend to listen to.

We Swedes, with our many excellent

qualities, yet possess one fault, in which we resemble the inhabitants of small towns, and that is our passionate love of gossip; we lend a willing ear to it, and repeat it with a thoughtlessness that is fearful. This is true of men as well as of women. Gentlemen rob their neighbors of honor and reputation while enjoying their punch, ladies while sipping their tea or coffee. The uniform as often as the mantilla covers a censorious heart. This was proven in the present instance. The Swedish officers did not allow themselves to be abashed by the Englishman's decided tone, but one of them immediately commenced a highly interesting story about Madame Dorbino. It was the same compilation with which Fru —— had treated the opera troupe. It now appeared in a considerably improved and enlarged edition. An English lord played the chief rôle in it. This gave the younger and more frivolous portion of the guests occasion to add some piquant allusions to the effect, that as the beautiful singer had shown a certain weakness for Englishmen, it was no more than right that these should take her part. Two members of the company maintained a complete silence during this scandalous account; these were Lothard and Tage. The former stood leaning against the back of a chair directly opposite the narrator, looking at him sharply; the latter had thrown himself on a sofa, as if thus to withdraw from all participation in the subject. The two Englishmen interrupted the story frequently, declaring it all to be untrue. When the calumnious recital was ended, Lothard said in his peculiarly clear and harmonious voice, —

“There are here present about thirty Swedes and two Englishmen. Of my thirty countrymen, who are also Madame Dorbino's, not one has lifted his voice in her defence, but this the two strangers have endeavored to do. Gentlemen, do you not consider this derogatory to

Swedes, especially as the lady whose honor has been so shamefully attacked has a relative among us?”

The Swedish officers looked at each other, slightly amazed.

“Lieutenant Aberney,” continued Lothard, “come forward, you who are a cousin of Madame Dorbino's, and defend her, or you will force me to usurp your place, thus depriving you of the fulfilment of a holy and precious duty.”

A grave-like silence succeeded these words. Tage did not move from his place.

“What, sir!” exclaimed Lothard with flaming eyes, “do I need to prompt you the second time to fulfil the requirements of honor? Did you not hear the reputation of a respectable woman lightly tampered with?” He took a step towards Tage.

The latter rose, mastered completely by the demons within him. He looked at Lothard with withering scorn, saying, —

“You are mistaken, Lieutenant Canitz, I am not related to Madame Dorbino, at least I shall never acknowledge such a relationship hereafter. I neither can nor will defend a person whose life and adventures I do not know, and upon whose honor there are so many stains.”

Lothard had once said to Tage, “Happen what may I shall never lay hands upon your person”; and yet he now gave Tage a sharp blow in the face. The sound of it became the period to the spoken sentence. A perfect tumult followed this, as one could say, unconscious act. The Englishmen went over to Lothard's side, Madame Dorbino's calumniators to Tage's. Lothard's act demanded satisfaction. At the words “weapons, time,” etc., Lothard awoke from a dream. What had he done? Broken a resolution, provoked a challenge, and that notwithstanding his declaration that he never could be brought to do it. He had forgotten himself, mortally offended a comrade, and that comrade was Tage. He had allowed these strangers to wit-

ness such a scene between two Swedish officers. Lothard would have given years of his life to be able to take back the inconsiderate blow. Poorly had he defended Skuldfrið's honor in giving occasion to such a scandal, which would spread unavoidably in many ways. It was long since Lothard had had to repent a hasty act. He perceived immediately that he could not then do anything to atone for what had occurred, but turning to the Englishmen he said with his usual self-possession, —

"I must beg you to overlook the unpleasant scene which you have witnessed. I neither will nor can excuse my behavior; I can only regret that Lieutenant Aberney and I have given you such a poor idea of the concord existing among the officers of the Swedish Navy. That the honor of a respected woman was in question is my only apology."

"No apology is needed, Lieutenant Canitz; you have acted like a man of honor."

"As only weapons can adjust our difficulty, I have a request to make of our comrades, that this whole affair may remain with those here assembled."

"You have our word of honor," was the response.

Lothard bowed to the company. Then he turned to the narrator of the scandalous story with the words, —

"Herr Lieutenant, you have repeated what others have told you, and cannot vouch for its veracity. This, to say the least, is thoughtless and inconsiderate, especially when it concerns a woman. Chivalry enjoins one to defend, not to attack, a woman's honor. The unpleasant consequences attendant upon your story will undoubtedly teach you to be prudent, when you again repeat what others have said."

The poor talebearer looked quite embarrassed. He felt that he had played a pitiful rôle. This consciousness made him ill-disposed towards Lothard, who

now only added a few words to the effect that he and Aberney, being the disturbers of the peace, ought to absent themselves, so as not to hinder the rest from the enjoyment which had through them been interrupted.

After Lothard had separated from the company, he walked slowly towards the plain and was rowed over to *Holmen*. His mind was gloomy; he realized with bitter regret that he had broken a resolution. If he fought a duel with Tage, he violated his word, and yet no other course remained to him. He had done Tage a wrong; he had allowed anger so to govern him that he had been guilty of rudeness; but, on the other hand, was it possible to listen coolly to Tage's vilifying words? No.

Lothard knew little of Skuldfrið's life during the past years; but she was the holiest treasure of his heart, and he believed in her as in the good and the noble. Notwithstanding the pain of finding Skuldfrið again as an actress and a *widow*, his love was still too true and genuine for him to cast any slur upon the woman he adored by miserable and degrading suspicions.

"Tage's behavior," thought Lothard, "showed but too plainly that Skuldfrið did not meet the hopes which he spoke of in his letter. Is it possible that he could have such a weak and despicable character, that this story could have any influence upon him? No, that cannot be, for with all his faults he has still in his way loved her. His conduct could only have proceeded from a slighted love and a deep-rooted hatred towards me. He has understood me sufficiently to realize that a base act committed against her was a means through which he should certainly succeed in throwing me out of balance."

Lothard entered his abode and went into the little saloon, which was the first

room. A couple of letters lay on the table; Lothard threw himself into an easy-chair, stretched out his hand for one of them, which he opened and glanced through rapidly. He then took up the other; at the first glimpse of it his expression changed. The envelope was torn open in great haste and he read:—

“The morning papers will announce that Madame Dorbino has left the stage forever, that the celebrated singer will nevermore appear.

“Skuldfrið thus brings Lothard the offering of her artistic reputation; and she believes the right moment is now at hand for the interview which could not take place in Naples. To-morrow forenoon Lothard is expected by

“SKULDFRIÐ.”

What did Lothard think and feel at the perusal of this note? Those who love alone know.

While all these important events were transpiring, Aunt Sara was engaged in putting away the Professor's and Tage's winter clothes very carefully in camphor, so that no moths should make depredations upon them during the summer. She looked quite genial and contented.

Skuldfrið, the blessed child, was now going to leave the theatre. Sara was fully convinced of it, although Skuldfrið, it is true, had not said anything, except that she should not appear for the present.

Sara had just finished sewing together the linen in which the winter garments were stowed, and was humming meanwhile,

“Come beautiful May,” etc.,

when the door-bell rang. The next moment the door was flung open and Tage came in with his hat on his head and an appearance of the wildest disorder.

“Is father home?” asked he, without saluting his aunt.

“No, he is not; but what in heaven's name is the matter with you?” cried Sara, dropping needle and thimble.

Tage threw himself upon the sofa, flung his hat far away from him, and running his fingers through his hair exclaimed,—

“I am the most unhappy man on earth; there is not a single being who sympathizes with me in my grief, my misfortune, my despair.” He hid his face in his hands.

“Good God, how sinfully you talk!” said Sara; and going to Tage, she laid her hand on his bowed head, and added in a tender voice: “My dear, dear boy, have you not always my heart, which is so fond of you that it holds you dearer than your father? Besides, have you not his affection, he who has upon all occasions shown himself so tender and good?”

“Do not speak of father; when it is a question of Skuldfrið and me, she always stands nearer his heart than I.”

“But of me you cannot say that I place any one before you,” whispered Sara caressingly.

When a human being is deeply troubled, or very much oppressed with sorrow, resentment, or grief, he gladly listens to the voice which speaks the language of affection, even if he at other times does not care for it.

Tage had, from the moment the Professor had adopted him, been Sara's favorite. She lavished her tenderness upon him, gratified all his wishes either openly, or, if they stood in opposition to Aberney's will, in secret. The old lady had, so to speak, fed Tage's egotism and given it all possible nourishment. That Tage had faults was something that Sara would not admit, when any one wanted to draw her attention to them; that Tage could be *wrong* was equally impossible. All others might be, but not he, unless he trespassed directly against the old lady; but even this was forgotten the next moment. She always found some way of exculpating him. Tage's feeling for Sara was neither grateful nor affectionate. It seemed as if the handsome young Lieutenant regarded all the

tenderness the old lady lavished upon him as something to which he was entitled. He never told her of what concerned him, and very seldom thought of her, except when she was present.

At this moment, when so many bitter feelings stirred his soul, he experienced an irresistible need of a sympathizing heart to whom he could pour out his sufferings and his indignation, one that he knew would spare him all reproaches and disapproval. We will not however listen to his complaints and lamentations, but content ourselves with learning the results.

The tower watchmen in Stockholm's churches sounded the hour of ten through their trumpets, the night patrol had begun their sleepy rounds, when the door of Professor Aberney's house opened and a little female figure stepped out into the street, taking her way in the beautiful spring evening over New Bridge to a solitary house situated somewhere back of Humlegården. She gave three knocks at the door. After a few minutes' delay a window was opened and a woman's voice inquired, —

"Who is there?"

"Sara," was the answer. The window was closed and the next moment Sara entered the house. She only remained there half an hour, and then returned home. Soon a tall woman came out from the lonely house. She took the same way as Sara, but only as far as Holmen, where she stopped before the entrance of a dwelling. A man-servant stood there engaged in declaring his tender feelings to a little bright-eyed maid, who now, since the family had gone to rest, had some leisure moments to devote to the affairs of the heart.

"Does Baron Canitz live here?" inquired the lady. The man turned round, looked at her from head to foot with a lubber's mien, and answered, —

"Certainly, Baron Canitz lives here, but he does not receive visits at night."

The lady made a motion as if she intended to pass by the rude scamp, but he placed himself in the doorway with his arms akimbo, saying, —

"My master has retired. You will have to come again to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock."

"I must speak with the Baron now, immediately," said the lady decidedly.

"It is too bad, but it cannot be done."

Steps were heard on the stairs, and a young man, clad in the uniform of the navy, was seen.

"Do you wish to see Baron Canitz?" said he politely to the lady, whose features showed that she had long ago passed the age in which any dubious significance could be attached to her visit.

"Yes, sir; I have something important to communicate to him which does not admit of delay."

"In that case, walk in. The Baron is alone and has not retired, for I left him just now. The door at the head of the stairs."

The servant stepped aside when he saw the officer. As the lady was about to ascend the stairs, he said, —

"Perhaps I shall inform the Baron —"

"It is not needed," replied the officer. The lady entered the room, and the man resumed the interesting conversation with his sweetheart.

In a little cabinet adjoining the saloon Lothard sat writing. The door of the outer room opened; he did not notice it. Light steps were heard; they approached the cabinet, but even this did not attract his attention. The tall woman stood on the threshold. She remained motionless, with her gaze resting upon the young man's bowed head. He was pale, his breast heaved unquietly, and it was easy

to perceive that his thoughts were not of a calm nature.

"Lothard!" whispered a voice, so mildly and yet so seriously that it seemed to indicate both tenderness and reproach. Lothard started and looked up. At the sight of the lady he rose, murmuring with pain, —

"Ah! I knew that you would come."

The lady advanced, reaching him both hands as she faltered, —

"You know it, and why?"

Lothard seized her hands, pressed them reverently to his lips, and said, —

"When you appear, then I have been guilty of some wrong or inconsiderate act. It has not been to reward, but to punish, that you have sought me. O mother! did you actually think that you had to warn me against my quick temper? Have these last six years, during which I have not seen you, been insufficient to prove that I place the aim you have set before me highest of all? Do you really feel that you must warn me against myself? His look rested sadly on his mother's countenance. She pressed his head to her heart, whispering, —

"My son, I have been proud of you; I thank you."

"But you will not gladden your son with your presence, except when —" Again Lothard looked at his mother with an expression of sorrowful reproach.

"Listen to me." The lady seated herself on the sofa and drew him to her side. "I have come to demand an account of you, not to show you the right way or warn you against temptation; but to ask you how you intend to act with regard to the difficulty that has taken place to-day between you and one of your comrades?"

"Ah! you know then?"

"That an unpleasant scene has occurred in which you and Aberney took the chief parts."

"You wish to know how I shall act. He may take my life," answered Lothard, drearily. "I cannot offer you any greater sacrifice than to place myself defenceless before an enraged enemy, at a moment when happiness smiles upon me for the first time."

"It would have been better not to drive him to this extreme," rejoined the lady almost coldly.

"If you know our difficulty, you must also be aware of the cause of it, and then —"

"I shall always disapprove of your behavior. Yet I am no longer your judge; therefore I only wish you to tell me what has transpired, so that I may have a clear understanding of the occurrence."

With a calm voice Lothard related all the circumstances. His usually proud features had now an almost humble expression. He looked directly into his mother's eyes, as if he wished her to read his soul. Her countenance became dark and sorrowful. When he finished she sat silent a long while, as if overpowered by her inner emotion. At last she said, —

"You must not accept the challenge."

"Do not ask the impossible; remember that, if I refuse, a shadow falls upon my honor."

"But this duel cannot, must not take place."

"I have promised you that not a drop of his blood shall stain your son's conscience. I shall not raise my arm in defence."

"But you will let *him* take your life, and draw all this guilt over your mother's head?"

"Would you rather that your son should be lightly esteemed by his comrades?"

"Anything else but this duel."

"Mother, I will make whatever sacrifice you require, but not this. I must let him take revenge upon me for the insult he has suffered."

"But I, I tell you that you and he

must not meet as enemies. It must, it shall not be."

The mother leaned towards Lothard and whispered a few words in his ear. Their effect upon the young man was instantaneous. He gazed at her a moment, seized her hands hastily, and murmured in a smothered voice, —

"Only this was wanting!"

He rose, took a few turns in the room, then seated himself again at her side, saying, —

"Now, mother, it is time that you told me *all*, and then — then —"

The mother began a long story, to which Lothard listened with intense interest. It was a sad page torn from life's great book. We will let night cover it, and go instead to greet the morning.

The Professor was just taking his coffee, when Sara handed him an elegant billet. A servant was waiting for an answer. Aberney glanced through the few lines and said, —

"Tell the messenger that I shall come."

In an hour or two we find the Professor in Countess Nathalie's boudoir, engaged in a lively conversation with the charming woman.

"Countess, I have listened attentively to your words, although I truly do not understand what you wish me to do in the matter. I can only regret deeply that Tage has so little strength and self-respect as to run about like a peevish woman initiating others into his private sorrows."

"Others, did you say, Herr Professor? Do you then forget that I am your son's friend?"

"If *you* are his friend, then you are a very dangerous one," replied the Professor, smiling; "and it would not surprise me in the least if he consoled himself over his disappointment."

"The question is not what I am, but whether you ought to try to assist your son in —"

"In making another unhappy," completed the Professor. "No, Countess, that I can never do."

"But, Professor, Frida once gave your son the promise of her hand, and you, being her relative, are certainly the right one to exhort her to keep her word. How is it possible for her to find any happiness, when she destroys that of her childhood's friend?"

"A promise given at the suggestion of others cannot be binding, especially when the heart raises its voice against it. I will not think so ill of my son as that he could exact this promise, since Skuldfrid has told him that she loved another."

"And this other, do you consider him worthy of becoming happy at your son's expense?"

"Yes, Countess, and so do you."

"What do you mean?"

"That you as well as I have a high opinion of Baron Canitz."

"I have none at all, either good or bad, about him; he is to me an indifferent person. For your son I really interest myself, and regret that you do it so little."

"Countess, I cannot conceive that his happiness consists in making two persons miserable besides himself. Let us therefore waste no further words upon the matter. Tage's duty commands him to do all in his power for the promotion of the happiness of these two who love each other."

"What you now ask is unreasonable."

"Why more unreasonable than the interest you show for my son? I believe, Countess, that if you loved Canitz, and knew that his felicity was comprised in Skuldfrid, that your dearest wish would be to favor their union."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, if you did not do all in your

power to work against it. In the first instance you would act like a good and noble woman, in the latter—" The Professor rose and added: "It cannot enter my mind to finish the sentence. Adieu, Countess, and allow me to give you some advice; we ought never to mingle in the affairs of others by trying to influence their action or destiny. What our selfishness covets by this means, we do not obtain. The stream of events often goes in direct opposition to our calculations and desires."

The Professor took leave of the Countess and returned home.

While the Countess and the Professor were conversing, Lothard sat, pale and gloomy, gazing before him. The nocturnal guest had disappeared, leaving only sorrow and grief in his soul. The entrance of a servant with coffee brought him back to the world in which he lived. He seated himself at a table to write a few lines. When he had sealed the note, he ordered the servant to take it to Madame Dorbino. This accomplished, Lothard again threw himself on the sofa, as if all else that could happen to him was indifferent. His expression resembled that of a person who was prepared to let fate take its course. He looked at his watch and muttered, —

"In an hour's time they will be here to arrange the conditions; within an hour I shall stand in a doubtful light before my comrades. O mother, mother, it will be a hard moment! I shall be forced to leave the Swedish Navy, and as a miserable adventurer again seek foreign lands; for no one will wish to serve with a man who first publicly insulted a comrade and then refused to give him satisfaction."

A deep and agonized sigh escaped him.

"It is terrible, when one has done

everything to fulfil the demands of honor, and like me sacrificed every personal interest to win respect for the name he bears, to see the precipitancy of a moment frustrate these efforts. I shall thus add another stain to the name already so sullied."

Steps were heard in the saloon. Lothard started. The blood burned like fire in his veins, and yet an heroic coolness was just now required.

Two of the officers of the fleet came in to Lothard, who rose and greeted them with a silent pressure of the hand. Before they had time to utter a word he said, —

"You have come to arrange the preliminaries for the duel between Aberney and myself. I must, however, beg you to ask him to consent to a reconciliation."

"Aberney has requested us to say that he refuses every peaceable settlement of the affair. He accepts no other satisfaction than that which weapons can render."

"Then he demands what I cannot give," answered Lothard, coldly and decidedly. "I will not fight."

"Canitz, what do you say!" exclaimed the two comrades, looking at him in a manner that expressed surprise and disapproval. "If you refuse to meet him, you must give the reason for it."

"I have none to give, except that I have decided not to fight."

"That is not an acceptable reason."

"It is the only one I have."

In spite of all that they now said, all their urging and entreaty, all the representations that he had no right to refuse Tage satisfaction for the insult he had suffered, Lothard remained unchanged. The gentlemen took their departure, after declaring openly that they considered Lothard's conduct such as to excite the disapproval of all his comrades.

We will make a visit to Skuldfrið simultaneously with these events. She had that morning risen unusually early and dressed herself with especial care. Was it not to-day that *he* would come? Skuldfrið smiled quite happy at her fair reflection; she was glad that she was beautiful, and became all the more charming through her joy. Her whole soul was filled with hope. Skuldfrið, unlike all others who are in love, had no anxious fear that Lothard's heart had changed. From the moment he had explained his absence from the meeting in Naples, in consequence of the letter not reaching him in time, all her faith in the depth and constancy of his love had returned. He loved, her own heart told her that; he loved, of this she was so firmly convinced that neither Lothard's cold tone, his bitter words, or anything was able to affect this conviction. She was therefore perfectly sure that he would obey her call and come. She was so glad at the thought that everything would now become clear between them. She should beg his forgiveness for the past and all the pain she had once occasioned; he would pardon and love her as before; her whole life would she give him, happy to be allowed to sacrifice herself for the one she loved above all else.

Time, which has wings when we are happy, seems slow as a tortoise when we are waiting for some one with impatience. Skuldfrið commanded her unquiet heart to be still: she exerted all her power to be calm, but she could not succeed. She listened with burning cheeks to the least sound. Suddenly the door-bell rang; it is he. Steps were heard in the saloon, the curtains at the door were pushed aside, and — Anais entered with a letter which she gave to Skuldfrið. The hand trembled which received and opened it; there stood these lines: —

'To-day also shall Skuldfrið expect

Lothard in vain, and to-morrow — his honor is so stained that he neither can nor ought to appear before the eyes of the woman who sacrifices for him her artistic fame and at whose feet he had wished to die. A curse rests upon

"LOTHARD."

Towards dinner-time Nathalie entered Skuldfrið's room unannounced. The charming Countess looked sad.

"I came!" she exclaimed, "to inform you of an extremely unfortunate occurrence which took place last evening, and upon which occasion Canitz did not display an especially commendable character.

"Then the occurrence has been considerably misrepresented," said Skuldfrið, who felt annoyed by the Countess's visit.

"O no, not in the least; I have it from the unhappy object of his rudeness, your relative, Lieutenant Aberney."

"Has Canitz forgotten himself towards Tage?"

"He has; and that before an assemblage of thirty or forty persons."

"That is inconsistent with Baron Canitz's character," declared Skuldfrið with spirit.

"However inconsistent it may be, it has nevertheless occurred. The naval officers gave a party last evening to some foreigners; the conversation fell upon a lady, about whom Canitz expressed himself quite differently from Aberney. When the latter wished to maintain his assertion, Canitz gave him a blow in the face. Those present insisted upon Canitz's immediate withdrawal from the company. This morning Aberney sent him a challenge, which he declined to accept, without giving any reason for his refusal. The consequence of this highly ungentlemanly conduct will be that the officers of the fleet will not serve with a man who so little understands the requirements of honor. Baron Canitz will be compelled to resign. This very evening

we shall read the scandalous story in all the papers."

"Has Tage told you all this?" asked Skuldfrið. She was pale and carried her head high.

"He has."

"I regret with all my heart that Tage has such a poor idea of what *his honor* demands, that he makes himself the promulgator of things that pass between comrades."

"Canitz has no longer any comrades in the Swedish Navy," rejoined Nathalie, proudly.

"Then the Swedish Navy has sustained a loss." Skuldfrið looked at the clock, adding: "You will excuse me, my dear Nathalie, but I must dress to go out."

Nathalie prepared to leave her.

"Do you know, Frida," said she, "I am surprised that you have so little sympathy and heart for one who has been your friend since childhood, that you do him injustice for the sake of a stranger."

"Tage is at this moment more of a stranger to my heart than Canitz. Besides, Nathalie, I know that if the latter has forgotten himself, it has occurred because the former has been guilty of some very blamable action." Skuldfrið gave the Countess her hand in adieu, and after a few brief words between them, Nathalie hurried down to her own room, to consider how to throw some obstacle in the way of a nearer approach between Skuldfrið and Lothard. The Countess held the theory that he who gains time gains all.

Skuldfrið went immediately to Abernethy. After an hour's conversation they both left his abode. Skuldfrið returned home and the Professor went to Lieutenant Steen, to learn from him as an impartial witness the true state of the case.

This day also had an end. The evening descended serene and still. The

church bells were ringing. It was seven o'clock. Holmen lay smiling in its green attire upon the blue waters. The people, those children of unrest, had finished their occupations for the day, and one boat-load after another was seen on its way to Djurgården. A close carriage drove quite cautiously over the bridge and thence to the house where Lothard resided. There it stopped and two ladies alighted, one of whom was closely veiled. They went directly to the young Lieutenant's apartments. The one who was unveiled went first and opened the door of the little outer room, in which a servant sat asleep.

"Is the Baron at home?" asked she in scarcely intelligible Swedish.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Is he alone?"

"All alone. Who shall I announce?"

"You need only announce a lady," answered the veiled woman, and laid a bill in his hand, adding, "Go before, I will follow you."

The servant obeyed an order which was accompanied by such an affecting proof of liberality. The lady whispered something to her attendant, and then disappeared through the door of the saloon. On reaching the cabinet the servant announced, —

"A lady wishes to see the Baron."

"Let her come in," was Lothard's reply.

The servant drew aside with the words, —

"Please walk in, the Baron is there."

He closed the door after her. Lothard turned toward the person entering, who at the same instant raised her veil. He started up, exclaiming, —

"Skuldfrið!"

For the second time Skuldfrið entered Lothard's abode. Between her first visit and this lay an interval of six years. Before she came to see all her beautiful dreams destroyed, and herself, an ignorant and inexperienced child, thrown into

a whirlpool of events, of which she could form no clear or definite conception. Now—now—she came with a heart full of hope and trust, firmly resolved to share with him the darkest destiny, joyous and happy if she could only remain at his side. Then she rejected him; now she went to give him her heart. Would he accept it?

We will conduct the reader to the solitary house back of Humlegården, the same evening Skuldfrið went to Holmen. In a simply furnished room we find the lady whom Lothard called mother. She sits leaning back on a sofa, with her face hidden in her hands. She is weeping. Aunt Sara is seated beside her.

"I do not understand your distress," said Sara. "Everything has gone happily and well, better than I dared to hope."

"O, do not speak so," faltered the lady. "*I know how unjustly I have acted.*"

"Unjustly," repeated Sara, looking quite astonished.

"Yes!" The lady now raised her head and looked at Sara. "Let us not speak of this, but of him. Skuldfrið could then make his happiness! The loss of her would ruin his character."

"That is my conviction. Ever since she refused him her hand, he has been wild. He has said that he shall become a wretch, that he has nothing to live for." Sara put her handkerchief to her eyes, while she continued in a trembling voice: "The poor boy will certainly destroy himself. Ah, his heart is so warm, and generous, and he has loved Skuldfrið so faithfully and sincerely, that she has now made him perfectly miserable."

"Does Skuldfrið know how much suffering this refusal of her hand has occasioned him?"

"Alas, yes; and yet she sent me these

lines in reply to the letter I wrote her." Sara handed the lady a letter, which she opened with emotion and read:—

"DEAR AUNT SARA:—It is not worth while to take it so hard if two young men happen to fall into difficulty, even if I am the bone of contention. I can assure you that no duel will take place. This is all that I can promise; for to sacrifice myself quite romantically by giving Tage my hand, according to your desire, I neither can nor will. Here are my reasons. When I gave Tage my promise six years ago, it was because my mother bade me do it. I did not then know my own feelings. Now, Aunt, I do not love Tage, and shall never commit the godless act of marrying without love. Besides, you must forgive me if I consider it pitiful in a man not to be able to bear the loss of the woman he thinks he loves, without complaining over it like a child and making others the advocates for *that* in which he has himself failed. Come what may, *Tage will never be the one to whom I join my fate*, this is my unalterable decision.

"Now, Aunt Sara, not a word more about the matter. I pity Tage less because he loves me than for his weak and unmanly course. I have heard of the scene between him and Baron Canitz. The latter displayed then, as always, his gentlemanly character. God bless him for it, is the wish of

"Your affectionate

"SKULDFRIÐ."

The lady folded the letter slowly and gave it back to Sara, saying,—

"Skuldfrið is forever lost to Tage."

"But if that troublesome fellow Canitz could be persuaded —"

"Not to love her," fell in the lady with a sad smile. "No person has such power over him as that. *Everything* can this man sacrifice, except his love for

Skuldfrid; what power has she not over the heart that once belonged to her!"

Aunt Sara was about to reply, when at the same moment an old domestic came in, saying in broken Swedish, —

"A gentleman wishes to see you."

"You know that I do not receive any calls."

"But he said that if I did not announce him or let him come in, he would force his way."

"Those were my words," said a clear voice behind the woman. The lady and Sara looked up. The latter exclaimed frightened, —

"Victor!"

The lady became deadly pale and unable to move. She merely indicated to the servant by a gesture that she should leave them.

At Nathalie's charming country place three persons had met. They were not enjoying the beautiful afternoon, but were shut up in the saloon, the blinds of which were closed, so that only a pale greenish light was shed over the elegant room.

"This is then Madame Dorbino's family history," said Countess Nathalie, who was one of the three. "It is a dark one; but alas! there is nothing in it that can throw a shadow upon Skuldfrid. She stands pure and chaste, as innocence itself upon the grave of her guilty mother."

"True; but Baron Canitz does not know that his loved one is the daughter of a poisoner," rejoined Dr. Wagner, who was also of the party. "What influence this knowledge will have upon his proud mind is uncertain."

"But, good God, that is not likely to change his feelings," exclaimed Tage, who was the third. "He, with his arrogant character, will consider his own name sufficient to efface every shadow which might possibly cling to Skuldfrid's. And

besides, when a man loves, he forgets everything."

"That is undoubtedly true; but there are certain family relations which might influence him considerably, should he learn whose daughter Madame Dorbino is."

"Why have you not told him this?" asked Nathalie.

"Because it has not been a part of my private plan."

"You must explain to us in what respect the knowledge that Harmen Aberney was Skuldfrid's mother could affect Lothard," said Tage, leaning his head on his hand.

"General Canitz's brother, the "secretary of legation," married Edith Hederman, Harmen's sister. This marriage, which in the beginning was a secret, excited a terrible consternation when it became known, for the secretary was betrothed to a rich and high-born Russian lady. The result was banishment to Siberia for him and his young wife, the work of the General, who became by this means the sole owner of Kronobro. This occurred in Baron Lothard's early childhood. One day during the young man's stay at one of the German universities he received a letter, which a travelling Englishman gave him. This was from his uncle, and had been intrusted by him to the Englishmen, who was then journeying through Siberia. The "secretary of legation" lay at the point of death. The stranger promised him that somehow the letter should be put in the hands of General Canitz's son. In St. Petersburg the Englishman learned that the young Baron was at the University of ———berg, and he went there to fulfil his promise to the dying man. The letter contained a short account of the cause of his exile, as well as a fervent prayer that Baron Lothard would have the sentence remitted for his wife, who by the time this reached him would in all probability be a widow.

Baron Lothard wrote immediately to the General and sent him the letter from his dying uncle, adding, that if his father did not, without delay, procure the widow of the departed leave to return from Siberia, he would never return to Russia, but would send a bullet through his own head. The General, who for many reasons was extremely anxious about his son's life, especially as he held the property his wife left by the law of primogeniture, losing it in the event of the son's death, sent by return mail the promise of his sister-in-law's liberation. But in exchange he exacted the pledge from his son that he should never under any circumstances form any connection with those belonging to her family. Lothard gave him his word. I still have the letter in which this promise is given."

"Well," inquired Tage, "did Edith leave Siberia?"

"Yes, she was sent over the Russian limits with the order to choose whatever country she pleased for her residence, except those included within the Russian Empire. The next year she died in France."

"Had she no children?" asked Tage.

"No, not that I know of," was the Doctor's answer.

A pause ensued. The Countess broke it, —

"So you believe that a promise, given to one long since deceased, will be so sacred to Baron Canitz as to deter him from an alliance which his heart desires?"

"I believe nothing, Countess; but I try everything when I wish to attain an object. Baron Canitz has for the last few years made it his task to hold to his word like a veritable Spartan, even when it has cost him his dearest wishes."

"Good! We will see what we can do," said the Countess, rising. "You have, my dear Doctor, pictured to me the Baron's love for Madame Dorbino in such vivid colors, that I do not know what to think of his cold and strange

manner towards her on the one hand, and his spirited defence of her honor on the other. He can thus fall from his rôle."

"The latter circumstance proves that he loves her!" exclaimed Tage. "His refusal to fight proves that he will not expose her honor through a duel."

"Not at all," replied the Doctor, "but only and solely that he does not wish to break his once-given word not to fight with you, or that he does not consider you worthy of such an honor."

"No, Doctor, you are now in error," said the Countess. "There is some secret, some powerful reason, that has prompted him to act thus."

"Possible." The Doctor took his hat and prepared to go.

The Countess followed him out into the next room.

"Doctor," said Nathalie, laying her hand on his arm, "I must have that woman out of the way, cost what it will. Ah, you do not know how deeply I now detest her!"

"And love him," added the Doctor.

"Hush, and listen to me; you must help me to get her away, but so that it looks as if she had gone off with that simpleton in there."

The Doctor looked at her a moment, as if Nathalie had given him an idea; then he answered, smiling, —

"When Satan desires that some really infernal idea shall arise, he allows it to proceed from a woman's brain. You, Countess, have given me the thread of something which can bring us speedily to our aim. Adieu, I will now leave you, and when my plan is ready I will communicate it to you."

The Doctor departed, and Nathalie returned to Tage.

The next morning, just as Tage had left his bed, the Professor came in to him. Aberney's brow was dark and his look severe.

"What has occurred between you and

Canitz?" inquired he, looking at his nephew.

"A difficulty which ended with an affront from his side," answered Tage, and looked at his adopted father quite fearlessly.

"What was the difficulty about?" Aberney's eyebrows contracted.

"About a woman."

"What woman? I wish to know her name."

"Father! I did not think that I needed to be taken to task for my actions at my age," said Tage defiantly. "I am no longer a boy."

"But you behave like a scapegrace."

"Papa!" exclaimed Tage, and started to his feet.

"Silence, and listen well to what I have to say to you. The lady's name that you will not mention I know." The Professor crossed his arms and continued in a severe tone: "What is the man called who hears a woman's honor assailed and does not raise his voice in her defence? He is called a man without any idea of chivalry; how is he designated who at such a moment denies his acquaintance and relationship with the same woman who a short time before he declared that he loved, but is the first to abandon when she is slandered? *He* is termed one without honor, worthy of receiving a blow in the face from every honest man, without the right of demanding satisfaction for it." The Professor laid his hand on his foster-son's shoulder, adding with emphasis: "*Such* a one are you."

Tage grew deadly pale and in an instant stood erect before Aberney.

"Open not your mouth in defence or for the utterance of any proud words; with me they avail nothing; you cannot very well fight a duel with the one who has occupied a father's place towards you. Dress yourself quickly, within an hour Canitz shall have *the satisfaction you owe him.*"

"I!" ejaculated Tage with flashing eyes, "shall I give *him* satisfaction, — him, who struck me so insultingly?"

"Yes, you shall."

"Never. There is no human power that can force me to this. I am the offended party, and he may either fight with me or —"

"Resign. Foolish boy! Do you then not see how contemptibly you have acted?"

"Contemptibly, and in what respect? I have said that I am not related to Skuldfrid, and I have spoken the truth. In order to know with whom I am related, I must first know whose child I am myself."

"So I believed when I adopted you as my son, giving you my name and all the rights a child could claim of a father, that my niece should be regarded by you as your cousin; but we will leave this. You shall within an hour know whose child you are. Dress yourself."

The Professor left the room.

Tage hurried to complete his toilet. A peculiarly uneasy feeling tormented him. He repeated the Professor's words, "Within an hour you shall know whose child you are."

Tage had troubled himself so little with the question, Whose child am I? that it seemed to him quite strange that he now thought of it. Until the day when Aunt Sara allowed him to come to Junta, he had grown up in a respectable family in Helsingfors; his maintenance was paid for and he received all possible care. During this time an elderly lady, whom he upon his arrival at Junta recognized as Aunt Sara, had occasionally visited him. He had never known her name, only that she was a relative of his deceased parents. He had been told that his father and mother died when he was quite young. When he at fourteen years of age was adopted by Professor Aberney, he took for granted that his parents were related to the Professor.

He had made some inquiries, but had then received from Aberney the express injunction not to try to find out anything pertaining to this subject, but to be contented with his present position. His fancy for Skuldfrid and the various interests connected with it caused him to reflect very little upon his origin; especially as he supposed when he grew older that he had some weakness of Aberney's to thank for his life. Now came the Professor's words and quite suddenly awakened his thoughts on this entirely forgotten subject. When he said that he did not know whose child he was, he hoped to throw Aberney into embarrassment.

As soon as Tage was ready he went out in the saloon, but was surprised to find Aberney's room full of people, as if it had been a large party. He became yet more astonished when he recognized in these guests all the comrades who had been present at the scene in Blå Porten. He greeted them with a mien, as if he would have asked, Why are you here?

They responded to his greeting with an equally inquiring look.

At the farther end of the saloon stood Lothard, conversing with one of the Englishmen, who were also present. Professor Aberney stood in the middle of the room, with Lieutenant Steen. When Aberney saw Tage he looked at his watch and said in a sonorous voice, —

"I have taken the liberty, gentlemen, of asking you to be present here on account of the difficulty which took place between Baron Canitz and my *foster-son*." Aberney laid strong emphasis upon this word. "I am sorry to see from last evening's paper that the public have been informed of it, and that this affair has been attended with very unpleasant consequences to Baron Canitz. I have therefore desired to right the injustice that has been committed, and render an explanation of the Baron's refusal to fight, which his delicacy did not permit him to do. Most

of you will undoubtedly admit that my *foster-son* made himself deserving of the blow that he received, when I apprise you that Madame Dorbino is my niece and cousin to Tage Aberney. His denial of relationship with her was thus an extremely ignoble action, not to use a stronger expression. However painful it is, I must confess that Baron Canitz's rebuke was perfectly justifiable, and that I in his place would have acted in the same way. That the Baron refused to fight with a man who had conducted himself in so ungentlemanly a manner I consider perfectly right, even if there were no other reason for this refusal."

"Baron Canitz has not given this as a reason," observed one of those assembled. "The Baron has only replied, that he would not fight. We do not consider such conduct towards a comrade whom he affronted before so many, in accordance with the requirements of honor. If the Baron will make an apology to Aberney before us, and he accepts it, then we have nothing further to say; otherwise, Herr Professor, you perceive that we must remain on the side of the injured party, and declare that Baron Canitz cannot be his or our comrade."

"The gentlemen have singular ideas of honor," rejoined Aberney, with a certain sharpness in his voice; "yet we will not contend about different opinions, but proceed to the explanation."

"Herr Professor," fell in Lothard, "you are more than magnanimous in wishing to defend me, for I neither can nor will justify myself; I do not even desire it. I will leave the Swedish Navy and go to England, in the hope that Lieutenant Aberney will then without rancor or ill-will think of him who at this moment regrets the enmity existing between us. Lieutenant Aberney's right as the injured party was to obtain satisfaction from me; I have refused to give it, and I leave the service."

"Because you will not fight a duel

with your — *brother*," interrupted the Professor. "My adopted son, Tage Aberney, is Baron Canitz's younger brother; this, my friends, is a family secret, which only the Baron and I knew."

"His brother!" they murmured.

"I his brother!" exclaimed Tage starting forward. "No, it cannot be so!"

"If it were not so, then Victor Aberney would not have said that it was, before all here assembled; and now, gentlemen, you have the solution of the enigma. If honor still demands that Lothard Canitz shall run a sword through your comrade, or send a bullet through his head, or in the happiest case allow himself to be treated in this manner, then I have nothing further to add."

Lothard stood leaning against the wall. He was pale. Some moments after this his comrades and the strangers surrounded him to press his hand in token of respect. When some courteous words had been uttered to the Professor, they prepared to leave.

Lothard then advanced into their midst, saying to them, —

"As comrades we are separated. My decision to leave the Swedish service is firmer than ever; that I am allowed to do it with the maintenance of your respect is very grateful to me, and therefore I am under obligation to Professor Aberney. I shall always seek to be worthy of his good-will and the honor of having been in the Swedish service."

In Skuldfrid's charming little cabinet, sitting by the open windows and caressed by the spring breezes, we find Skuldfrid and Lothard in the afternoon of the same day. Her hand is clasped in his. In her mild and melodious voice she relates the following, —

"The first two days after I had learned that the unhappy Harmen Aberney was my mother, I was constantly in prayer.

I felt unspeakably miserable. On the third day my mother returned from her journey to Abo.

"When she entered my room and my eyes fell on her haggard and sombre features, I almost uttered a cry of passionate grief, so terribly painful was the impression from seeing her again, after I knew the horrible secret of the past. When she pressed her lips to my brow, I closed my eyes, so that my glance should not betray the torture which lacerated my heart.

"This was certainly one of the most bitter and painful moments of my life. I, who from my tenderest childhood had looked up to my mother with a feeling of reverence, as to a higher and more perfect being, now knew that this mother had committed a deliberate crime. It was as if despair had seized my soul. I was awake all that night, thinking upon the future and lamenting that I could not purify her guilty conscience. The dangers which threatened my mother, in case *the one* who had divulged her secret to me uttered it to any other, stood vividly before my imagination. Ah! at this time I distrusted my dearest friend," added Skuldfrid, looking at Lothard with a glance. "The stupor of soul, into which the first blow plunged me, passed away, and when the morning came the struggle was ended. I had conquered the bitterness of my heart, the chilling impression and even grief itself. It was clear to me that I must now *act*, and save my mother from all the sad consequences of her crime. Aunt Sara had told me about her niece Harmen, that she was suspected of having poisoned her first husband; and that after the death of the second she was a person whose name Uncle Aberney would not hear mentioned. His aversion to her was so great that he would not even allow any one to speak of the child to whom his brother's guilty wife had given birth. The discovery of who Fru Smidt

was would thus kill the affection he had shown me ; so I believed in my ignorance of what had passed between my mother and him. My resolution was taken ; we must go away, far, far from this spot so dear to me. How this could be done was something that I did not very well know. Neither my mother nor Annika should suspect that I knew the past.

"With perfect strength and energy I greeted the morning ; I had cast away all weak sorrow over what could not be altered, for with all my tears I was utterly unable to efface the dark stains upon my mother's life. It was not I, her daughter, who should condemn her. No, my duty commands me to assist her, in the remorse and sorrow that consumed her soul.

"When Annika came up to my room, she was surprised to find me recovered from my indisposition. I desired to know if my mother could pay the rent. Annika then told me that the business man with whom the remainder of my mother's little capital was invested had run away for debt and thus reduced us to actual poverty. My mother had now obtained money for the rent, however, by selling her jewelry.

"While Annika was telling me all this, Dr. Wagner arrived. He seemed greatly surprised to find me well, and said, after he had convinced himself that my pulse was calm, that he wished to speak a few words with me in private. Annika left us, and Dr. Wagner now told me that he had long intended to warn me against Baron Canitz." Skuldfrid leaned her head against Lothard's shoulder and added in a caressing voice : "I was very, very wicked those times ; I believed all the ill they said of my Lothard."

"And that just when he would have sacrificed his life to spare you a suffering." Lothard bent down to her and sealed his words with a kiss.

Skuldfrid continued, —

"After the Doctor had talked a long while about you and your plan of forcing me, through the debt in which my mother stood to Kronobro, to comply with your wishes, he passed over to giving me friendly advice. This was that I should leave Finland and with my voice create the pecuniary independence which it assured me. He offered to give me a letter of introduction to a distinguished musician in France, Monsieur X—— ; then he arranged the plan for my journey, the means I should have for it, and took upon himself to dispose of our effects to the greatest advantage and thus procure the money speedily to take us to Paris. I believed the tempting description of the treasure I possessed in my voice, and I thanked him. He had without knowing it given me a prospect of carrying out the resolution I had already taken. Now it only remained to obtain my mother's consent. I told the Doctor that I did not know how this was to be done. He then replied, that if I would allow him he would speak to my mother, and promised on his honor to secure her permission. He kept his word ; after an hour's conversation with my mother he sought me again to tell me that she was perfectly satisfied to leave Finland, and that she left it entirely with me to decide upon our course. After this conversation with Wagner, my poor mother appeared more shy, gloomy, and anxious than before.

"Eight days later we had left Finland ; I with my soul filled with a thousand agonizing feelings, miserable in the very depths of my heart, but prepared to work in my turn for my mother and her faithful companion, Annika.

"Ah ! when I turned my back upon Ektorp, without a word from you telling me that you regretted the pain you had occasioned me, it seemed to me that a string had snapped within me, and I felt then that my soul's warmest feelings re-

mained with you, in spite of all that gave me reason to consider you a heartless egotist, who employed any means to attain his desires. I thought then that if you had only with a single line expressed some sympathy, or assured me that the mournful secret was buried within you, I should have felt happy ; but no, not a word."

"O, that Wagner !" exclaimed Lothard with bitterness ; "what a fearful amount of evil has he not caused. I shall never forgive him that —"

"That we are so happy," whispered Skuldfrið, smiling. "Felicity ought to make us good and lenient ; it cannot associate with bitterness." Skuldfrið looked up in her lover's dark eyes with an expression so beautiful, that it called forth pure sunshine in his glance. After a moment she continued her account.

"One month after this we were in Paris, and a few weeks later my mother had become — deranged." Skuldfrið leaned her head against Lothard's shoulder ; a pause ensued. He put his arm around her waist and drew her closer to his faithful breast. Finally he whispered tenderly, —

"Poor angel !"

"Ah, Lothard, it was a terrible situation : alone, a stranger, young and unknown, without friends and with an insane mother, an old, sick servant, and destitute of means. Ours were then exhausted. I felt with dismay that my course had been imprudent in throwing myself in this way upon a strange country. Monsieur X——, the only person to whom I was recommended, was not in Paris. He had gone to England, where he intended to reside for a year. I had turned to the landlady of the miserable hotel where we lived to obtain advice, and she proposed to procure me a situation in a restaurant to sing in the evening. I refused this offer, and at her suggestion applied for an engagement at

some of the smaller theatres ; but this also failed. All our money was gone, we owed for a whole week's board, and my mother's aberration increased every day. Perfectly desperate, because our landlady had declared that if she was not paid we should have to move, I took the resolution to accept the proposal that had been offered me to sing at a restaurant. It was in the evening. I had just told our landlady of my desperate decision, and then returned to our little room. Overcome with grief, I began to sing, in order to deaden the anguish within me and silence my mother's insane talk ; for as soon as I sang she became still and listened. The longing for home had seized my mind, sorrow and despondency filled my soul. My heart yearned for you, and I sang, sang as if it had been my 'Swan Song.'

"While I was thus giving vent to my overcharged feelings, the door opened, and a man with silver-white hair entered with hasty steps. I ceased my song, my mother screamed with alarm, and Annika sprang up from the stool on which she had been sitting.

"Pardon me, if I frighten you," said he in French ; "but in passing by I heard a wonderfully beautiful voice ; I inquired to whom it belonged, and learned that its possessor desired an engagement. He said that his name was Dorbino, and that he was a composer of great influence at the Royal Opera. He offered me his assistance if I wished to make use of my voice. Often have I thought since then that it was Providence who sent Monsieur Dorbino to the humble hotel where we resided, and that just at the moment when I with a despairing heart sang my home songs ; for from that instant my fate was changed. Monsieur Dorbino became my teacher, my father, my support. He procured my poor mother a place in a private asylum for the insane, where Annika was allowed to attend her. To me he opened his house, of which his

eldest sister had charge; she had also been a singer in her youth. The next year I was engaged at the Royal Opera in Paris, and in the summer went to England, accompanied by Monsieur and Mademoiselle Dorbino, who both treated me with the greatest kindness. Monsieur Dorbino had had a daughter of very promising talent, and whose voice resembled mine. One of his dearest wishes had been that she in time should become a distinguished singer. Death snatched her from him at seventeen years of age. In me he seemed to see her recalled to life. When I made my engagement at the Royal Opera, he persuaded me to take his name, as it would then seem to him that his daughter still lived, and that my success was hers. On returning to Paris from London, I found my mother recovered from her insanity, but very feeble. I had her brought to my home immediately, in Monsieur Dorbino's house. The physician declared that she had only a few weeks to live. Two days after her removal, she asked me for pen and ink. She wrote a long letter, which Annika was charged to post. Two weeks after this, when my mother was so enfeebled that we expected every moment to be her last, I was informed that a lady wished to see Madame Smidt."

"It is she!" exclaimed my mother, sitting up in her bed. Soon she was clasped in the arms of a tall woman. I left them alone; a presentiment told me that the stranger was my mother's sister Edith.

When night came to succeed the day, Harmen Aberney had ceased to live. As a comforting angel, Edith Aberney sat at her daughter's side. My mother had been allowed to step into her grave without suspecting that I knew of her crime."

"Do you know, Skuldfrid, whose mother this Edith is?" asked Lothard, seizing her hands hastily.

"Yes, she told me. She is Lothard's mother."

"Then you know her history?"

"No, she only told me that she was your mother, but that this was a secret to the world. She also related how she had arrived at Kronobro just in time to prevent you from taking Wagner's life. When I mentioned that your steward had threatened to drive my mother away from Ektorp, she informed me that you had no knowledge of the affair. Then you stood perfectly pure to my soul. When I in memory reviewed your whole course, I realized how illy I had acted towards one who loved me so deeply. I was seized with the most burning desire to hasten to you, to throw myself at your feet and deprecate my fault; but your mother told me that you had entered the English service and sailed to India with a British squadron. When my mother was buried, Aunt Edith went away. She promised that as soon as you returned from your voyage, she would apprise me of it; but she did not keep her word. Annika died a short time after my mother."

"One year after the death of my mother, Monsieur Dorbino yielded to a severe lung-complaint which had for ten years been consuming his life. His sister and I watched over him six weeks. We were united on his death-bed, so that I should have the right to bear a name which he considered me to do honor to. He divided his property between me and his sister, but demanded as a condition, that I should still remain a few years at the Royal Opera in Paris, and that I should never make an engagement at any other theatre, except during vacation, when I might appear in the other opera houses in Europe, in order to make Madame Dorbino's name as celebrated as it deserved. I gave this promise; it was the least I could do for one who had been my own and my mother's benefactor."

"The next year Monsieur Dorbino's niece, Countess Renstein, arrived in Paris. It was there that I made her acquaintance. The next summer we met in Rome, and from there made a journey to Naples together. I received no news from your mother. I had written to her according to the address she gave me, but without obtaining any answer.

"During my stay in Naples I chanced to learn that you were on board the frigate *Carolina*. How I then acted you know, and also that two years again went by before I had courage to make another attempt to approach you; but when Nathalie in all her letters spoke of you and Uncle Aberney, it became impossible for me to live separated from you both any longer. I came to Sweden, firmly resolved to win back the heart which was once mine and for whose possession there was no sacrifice too great."

In the evening, when Lothard came home from his visit to Skuldfrid, he received the following note:—

"HERR BARON: If you are at leisure to-morrow, then honor me with a call. I desire to receive from you some information which I do not wish to ask of any other.

"With respect,

"NATHALIE RENSTEIN."

Lothard obeyed the call and presented himself at Nathalie's. He found the young Countess alone.

"Are you very much provoked with me, Baron, for making this demand upon your time?" said she, with one of her most seductive smiles and her childish air.

"Countess, I am never provoked with a beautiful woman," answered Lothard, politely.

"A little circumstance has occurred which forced me to ask this visit of you.

As I was looking over some papers that my husband left, I found a letter among them. These words were written on the margin, 'Found in Hotel **, in Berlin.' The letter is written in Russian, and I desire that you, who understand this language, will enlighten me as to whether it can possibly be of any value to me." The Countess handed the letter to Lothard.

He received it without the least suspicion; but when he opened it he changed color and turned his penetrating eyes upon the Countess.

"Have you really found this among the Count's papers?"

"Yes, as I told you."

"You do not know from whom or to whom it is?" Lothard smiled.

"No, I do not understand the Russian language, and therefore I have troubled you."

"I am astonished that the choice fell upon me. Why not Dr. Wagner, he also reads Russian?"

"The Doctor has gone away; do you not know it?"

"No, I am completely ignorant of the fact. Admit that all this seems very singular." Lothard now laughed, and looked at Nathalie with an expression, which even upon her nature, rendered callous by art, had the effect of driving the blood up to her cheeks.

"Baron Canitz, I do not understand your behavior or your words," said Nathalie, assuming a haughty attitude.

"In that case, Countess, we will proceed to the reading of the letter, which is to no other than myself and from General Canitz. I was fifteen when I received it. Do you wish to hear its contents?"

"If the letter is to you, I cannot have any interest in hearing what it is about."

"Perhaps you already know it?"

"Herr Baron, I believe you forget what politeness demands!" exclaimed Nathalie.

"No, Countess, I do not ; but I could wish that you and I might throw aside our masks. You have not found this letter among your husband's papers ; you have obtained it from Dr. Wagner, for what purpose I do not comprehend."

"Well, then, I did receive it from Dr. Wagner," said Nathalie, who saw that a well-feigned frankness was here in place. "He gave it to me with the request that I should deliver it to you, begging you to consider the promise you once made your father."

"Why did he give you such a commission?" asked Lothard, coldly.

"From the simple reason that he knows my regard for you."

"You are too kind." Lothard bowed.

"He also knows that you distrust him, and therefore he desired that you should learn from some one else that Madame Dorbino's maiden name was not Smidt, but —"

"Aberney," interrupted Lothard ; "I know it."

"Do you also know that her mother —"

"Was sister to Edith Aberney, who was married to the secretary of legation, Canitz. Yes, Countess, I know it all."

"In that case, Dr. Wagner's uneasiness lest your former attachment to Madame Dorbino should revive was groundless."

"Completely." Lothard smiled. "The good Doctor thus believed that he could save me from my heart's weakness, by informing me that Madame Dorbino belongs to a family with which I have promised never to enter into any connection."

"He had the firm conviction that Baron Canitz would never break a promise, and least of all one that was given to his deceased father. That ought to be sacred."

"Yes, a promise to my father should

always remain so." Lothard's brow furrowed. "But, Countess, you who bestow so much kindness and good-will upon me, have probably ascertained the reasons why the Doctor is so anxious that I should keep my word. Has he anything personal against Madame Dorbino?"

"She is the daughter of the poisoner Harmen Aberney. There is something dangerous in the inheritance which the daughter of a criminal has received."

"Indeed, but I am myself the son of a man who allowed his brother to languish and die in Siberia, who allowed Wagner's father and several other Poles to perish under the knout, and who transported the Doctor's mother and sisters to Siberia ; in a word, a man who had a cruel heart and a faithless character ; I too have an unfortunate inheritance."

"But there is nothing in your own character that is cruel and faithless."

"Is there anything of the kind in Madame Dorbino's?"

"Far be it from me to assert it ; but what she is we do not know. She is first and last an actress. Your happiness, Baron Canitz, cannot possibly bloom at her side."

"It cannot ; no, you are right ; and I shall no longer seek it there." Lothard smiled gladly. Nathalie did not know how to interpret this smile.

"Thanks for these words, which will most surely give joy to one who follows your every step with a father's solicitude and interest." Nathalie offered him her hand, adding in a soft voice : "Excuse me if I have played my rôle poorly in delivering the letter. Dr. Wagner believed me to be a better actress than I am, when he asked me to give you this reminder from the dead ? and thus hinder an unhappy union."

"But, Countess, I do not know upon what your fears are founded. I have been the *only one* who has not rendered

homage to the singer Madame Dorbino."

"That is true; but the Doctor knew your former fancy for her, and I have understood sufficient to draw the conclusion that she still exercises a great influence upon your heart."

"I can solemnly declare that Madame Dorbino neither is nor ever has been dangerous."

"Baron, remember your words to me a short time since."

"Did I tell you then that I loved her?"

"You said that she was the woman you admired and respected highest of all. You have defended her in a manner that has cost you a great deal —"

"Ah! Then you know of the affair at Bla Porten." Lothard frowned.

"I have read it in the papers."

"All present promised silence, and yet the whole city knows of it. It pains me that *men* can break their word. For the rest, Countess, to respect and admire a woman, ay, even to defend her, does not by any means prove that a man loves her."

"Your words at once surprise and gladden me." Nathalie looked fixedly at Lothard.

"One cannot serve two masters at the same time, Countess. I love the woman too well, who is to recompense me for the shipwreck my ambition has suffered, and at whose side I intend to find heaven upon earth, to pay homage to any other."

"Ah! Then you love —"

"Yes, I, the granite man, as you call me, can live happy, despised and rejected by the whole world, if I may only pass my days at her feet, soothed by her voice and charmed by her image."

Nathalie's eyes were as if magically held to Lothard's warm and animated features, in which the strength of a deep and powerful passion was visible. Never

had he been so handsome as at this moment. Nathalie's heart beat with a peculiar trepidation. Hope, false hope, presented in a second so many charming and flattering images.

"Forgive me, Countess, for speaking about myself," resumed Lothard, rising; "but your interest in my welfare has occasioned it. I will therefore add: Madame Dorbino can never become dangerous to me, because I shall to-morrow present to you my betrothed, *Skuldfrid*." Lothard pressed the Countess's cold hand in adieu and left.

"Betrothed!" repeated Nathalie, when Lothard was gone, — "betrothed; *he*, the only man for whom I have felt any other interest than that of vanity."

Nathalie felt her blood rising into a ferment; every drop of it seemed changed to gall. It was not grief, but a feeling of intense indignation that she experienced over Lothard's *daring* to attach his hope and happiness to any one but her. Had she not employed all possible means to captivate him? There had even been moments when she believed in her success. Yes, all this time, during which Madame Dorbino had been with her, Nathalie had flattered herself that she possessed some value for Lothard, and *now, now* she saw all her hopes disappointed. Wounded vanity in a woman is fully as dangerous as wounded self-love in a man.

A woman, who has made it the object of her life to please, and to be attended by obsequious cavaliers who sigh for her favor, excuses everything, except her non-success in captivating those whom she wished to win. The same man who has been the recipient of her most fascinating smiles and ravishing glances becomes her deadly enemy if he opposes her attempts to conquer him, and she now spares no pains to injure the inac-

cessible person. Every one knows that woman is an angel when she loves, but a fury, when she hates.

Nathalie, the priestess of vanity, intrigue, and coquetry, who had neither felt friendship, love, nor aversion for any one, was now seized with a violent desire to occasion Lothard some evil, some bitter grief or humiliation, some incurable wound. And Skuldfrid, this presumptuous being, who had dared to place herself between Nathalie and Lothard, what could be said of her had enough to equal the resentment Nathalie felt? The Countess, however, was not one to sit down inactive and brood over her defeats. She belonged, on the contrary, to those wilful natures that are irritated by opposition and love to give vent to their feelings in a forcible manner.

Only a few minutes did Nathalie remain sitting as if stunned by her disappointment. Then she sprang up and rang violently. A servant obeyed the call.

"Take my close carriage and drive immediately to Dr. Wagner's; ask him to come here."

The servant withdrew and the Countess wrote the following:—

"LIEUTENANT ABERNEY: I am a poor friend; I have served your interests badly. Canitz is to be betrothed to Skuldfrid. He will thus snatch her from you. Call on me as soon as you receive this.

"NATHALIE."

Somewhat later the following note was handed the Countess:—

"MY GRACIOUS COUNTESS: You who have taken so much interest in a *pauvre savant* and bestowed your friendship upon the learned man's darling, his niece, will surely not fail to honor with your presence Skuldfrid's betrothal to Lothard Canitz on the 4th of June. Where you appear, there are also joy and the graces as your waiting-maids.

"With the greatest respect I have the honor of signing myself,

"Your most humble servant,

"VICTOR ABERNEY."

Nathalie crumpled up the letter with a convulsive motion, muttering, —

"I shall come; but I will bring with me to your home very different maids from those of joy, you hypocritical pedant. It is as if he wished to rejoice at my defeat. That proud Finn will also have to be humbled by learning that people know the stains in his family history."

The Doctor now presented himself. The crafty Pole's countenance betrayed a certain degree of impatience; the first thing he said was, —

"Countess, what are you thinking of, to send for me when I am supposed to be away?"

"I could not do otherwise. See here." Nathalie handed him the Professor's note.

"Ah, already!" muttered Wagner. "That is more than I calculated. I did not think that the complications which existed would be unravelled so soon." The Doctor threw himself in an easy-chair, entirely forgetting his usual formality.

"He will become very happy, is it not true?" said Nathalie.

"Enviably so," answered the Doctor; "that woman has a heart which resembles a precious stone. I have observed her under the most bitter trials, and I have never seen this beautiful face lose its expression of trust, or this proud neck bend. She has borne adversity with fortitude and courage, and taken an active and energetic part in life. This was during the time when I was her friend, and when she had confidence in me. I was then a better man. She has a wonderful power over those with whom she comes in contact. She could make Satan himself mild and gentle as a lamb.

There is no pain or suffering for Canitz so long as she remains at his side. He will be very, very happy." The Doctor leaned his head on his hand and muttered: "Happy, *he*, the son of the destroyer of my family!" Wagner raised his head quickly and added: "No, should I even degrade myself to the commission of a crime, a Canitz must not become happy."

Nathalie had remained silent, waiting for the Doctor to add something more; but as this did not occur, she said, —

"Well, Doctor, shall we sit down quietly and behold their happiness, — a happiness blooming upon the ruins of our plans?"

"I have never yet accepted the ignominious rôle of beholding what is disagreeable to me. No, Countess, one who wishes to reach an aim must also be able to dare something for its attainment. Let us see if you have energy enough to follow this doctrine."

"You can be fully assured of it."

"Good!" The Doctor got up to close the door, but at the same instant a servant entered and announced, —

"Lieutenant Aberney!"

The next moment Tage saluted the Countess, stammering some words of acknowledgment, etc. It could be easily seen from his appearance that a devastating storm had passed over his soul.

"Well, Lieutenant Aberney, I hear that you have become reconciled with Baron Canitz," said the Doctor.

"Yes," was all Tage answered.

"He is to be betrothed to Skuldfrið," added the Countess.

"That is also true."

"And you are satisfied with it?"

"I cannot hinder it."

"What would you say, Lieutenant, in the case I made this union impracticable?" asked Nathalie.

"I should answer, that this does not lie within the range of possibility."

"But if?" The Countess looked at him.

"You are very kind, Countess, to continue to show me so much friendship, that you even at the last moment try to keep up my courage; but it is too late. Ah, you cannot imagine how unhappy I am!" Tage passed his hand over his brow. "If I could only extinguish the animosity I still entertain for him, but it is impossible."

"Action, not complaint, befits a man! We will now listen to the Doctor's remedy for the present ill. Tell us your proposition," added the Countess, turning to Wagner.

Two days after this the Professor's apartments were festively arranged for the reception of guests. Aunt Sara, attired in a new black silk dress and a brand new cap, tripped back and forth through the rooms, crying a little now and then and sighing as deeply as if she was preparing for a funeral. Every time she went through the saloon she cast a troubled look at Tage's door and murmured, —

"My poor boy! Would to God that this terrible day was over. I never shall forgive Skuldfrið the wrong she has done him. No, never shall I forget that she could prefer the other. It is Victor's fault. Yes, so it is. He would not listen to my warnings." Her handkerchief was now drawn out, Sara wiped her eyes and sobbed a little, but just then her eyes fell on the candles in the lustre, and straightway her thoughts took another direction. "Good gracious, how that Lotta has put in the candles! I declare it does seem as if one must be everywhere, or things go wrong." She mounted a chair, and standing on tiptoe, grumbling at the carelessness, lack of independence, etc., Sara repaired the neglect. Just as this was fairly accomplished, the Professor came out of his

room and took his way to Tage's. Aunt Sara intercepted him and said in a voice which trembled with pain and indignation, —

"Where are you going, dear Victor?"

"In to Tage," was the calm answer.

"Leave the boy in peace," said Sara hastily, and fell a little into the weeping strain. "I should think you had tormented him enough. I tell you what it is, Victor, I never could have believed you would behave so heartlessly to Tage as you have done. I will not say a word about myself, how you have treated me." A flood of tears now succeeded, in the midst of which she continued with moving stress and in a very high soprano: "I am so used to being ill-treated; but I had supposed that the child you adopted as your own could have counted on your fatherly tenderness. Poor Tage, what has he not had to endure, without a single friendly word to alleviate his suffering!" Aunt Sara was again obliged to draw out her handkerchief. "And this unworthy betrothal, at which you have forced him to be present and —"

"Now, Aunt, you have said quite enough," said Aberney coldly. "In half an hour the guests will arrive. I hope you do not intend to receive them with tears and sobs. As far as Tage is concerned, I have but one thing to reproach myself for, namely, that I have had so much indulgence with him. When, like him, one behaves like a man without honor, self-command, or respect for anything but his own selfishness, then it is a father's duty to compel his refractory son to act as honor demands. Do not speak to me of Tage; but thank God that you stood by his side, for otherwise I would have declared him unworthy of bearing my name before all his comrades."

"What in the name of Heaven do you say?" exclaimed Sara, looking at her nephew in affright.

"I say that only consideration for you restrained me from punishing Tage as

he deserved. I consider him capable of any mean act whatever."

The Professor went to the door and laid his hand on the knob, adding, —

"He is the very opposite of Lothard Canitz; there is no magnanimity which the latter has not shown my unworthy nephew, whose only answer has been some new treason against honor and duty. Neither you nor I have any joy of him."

Aberney opened the door of his foster-son's room. He found Tage standing a few steps from it, pale, and with head erect. Aberney closed the door behind him, and Tage repeated slowly, —

"Only consideration for Aunt Sara restrained you from punishing your *unworthy* nephew, for whom you do not regard any mean act impossible. Have I then fallen so low in your esteem?"

"Yes," answered the Professor.

"You consider me a miserable egotist, destitute of honor and faith?"

"Such has been your conduct."

"I am a weak wretch, without moral courage or self-command?"

"You are."

"The past has so represented me." Tage put both hands to his brow and pressed them against his temples. "Yes, this hell of envy, jealousy, wild unrestrained desires, and burning passion has actually changed me into a despicable creature."

He threw himself into a chair, with his face buried in his hands.

"And yet," said Aberney with earnestness, "you have been the object upon which all my hopes were centred. When I stood by your bedside the first morning you slept under my roof, and contemplated your fresh and open face, I saw in you the joy of my old age, its pride and its honor. I gave you my *name*, fully assured that you would do it honor; but it is wrong to build any hopes on the children we bring up; they seldom fulfil what they promise."

Tage sat motionless. Some moments'

pause ensued. At length Tage rose, and extended his hand to his father with deep emotion and an expression of humility.

"Father, I know that I have poorly answered what you had a right to expect of me. I have been a willing slave to my passions, and that to such a degree that I should blush if you had any idea of it; but it is now over. Ah! I shall never forget the impression your words to Aunt Sara made upon me. Forget the past, the future shall atone for it."

The Professor pressed his son's hand in silence. Tage continued, —

"The revolution that has taken place in my destiny, the complete sundering of all my hopes and desires which has been the result, has shown me my own weakness and all the elements of evil that exist within me. I now know that if I remain here and witness the happiness that might have been mine, if fate had so ordained, I shall never succeed in gaining power over my lower nature. In short, I must go away, so far that not even the sound of the names that have the power of exciting evil thoughts and feelings within me can reach my ears."

"I fully approve of this. What you now desire I had intended to propose to you. You must, however, before that, show that you can be a *man*, since you have been a weak slave. My respect and confidence in your better resolutions will depend entirely upon the manner in which you conduct yourself while you remain here."

"You shall be satisfied."

"Commander Z——," said Aunt Sara, opening the door.

In an hour's time the guests were assembled. They consisted of Lothard's superior officers and comrades, as well as several families with whom the Professor was allied either through relationship or friendship. Nathalie only was missing. Lothard and Skuldfrid were so handsome, that it was a joy to look at them. Hap-

piness is the best cosmetic. Tage was pale and silent, but displayed a calmness and self-possession that surprised Abernethy exceedingly, and so affected Aunt Sara that she was obliged to leave the room in a trice and shed a few tears. Skuldfrid smiled at Tage very cordially, and there was so much clemency and goodness in her glance, that he seemed to feel the loss of her still more deeply. He avoided looking at Lothard's noble face; he felt that the sight of the happiness depicted in it would only excite his anger and throw him back into the dark stream of jealousy.

Countess Renstein was announced. Tage was just speaking to Skuldfrid. He, like all present, turned at the sound of the Countess's name and looked toward the door.

Nathalie entered. She was extremely charming. Like Skuldfrid she wore a white silk dress with a garniture of flowers.

A dark flush of indignation passed over Lothard's brow when he saw that Nathalie was dressed like his betrothed. The Professor greeted the Countess with marked courtesy, to which Nathalie playfully responded. She was irresistibly captivating.

Tage's gaze was persistently fastened upon her. The cloud on his brow lighted. She loved him, this seductive woman, to whose graces and accomplishments all paid tribute. Such a consciousness ought to have the power of comforting a lieutenant's heart. At length, when the moment was favorable, he approached her.

"You resemble Skuldfrid to-night more than ever," said he with a look of admiration.

"If that is so, I have succeeded in my efforts; but what then? Those who love Frida will not even for an hour forget her for me." Nathalie gave Tage a very dangerous glance.

"Countess, if this is true, then the only misfortune lies in the fact that one

has not seen you first ; in that case you could not be forgotten for Skuldfrið."

Nathalie looked at Tage's face. It was serious, and there was something in it which told her that he meant what he said. She leaned nearer to him, saying in a whisper, —

"I hope you have not forgotten?"

"I never forget."

"And this evening?"

"I will be at my post."

"Good."

Some gentlemen approached the Countess. They all began to speak of indifferent matters. The conversation soon became animated. Lieutenant Steen, who had recently been to England, related some remarkable criminal cases. Nathalie obliged Skuldfrið to take a place beside her. The Professor was also one of the group that surrounded the Countess. Lothard stood behind Skuldfrið's chair.

"During my stay in Bremen," said the Countess, "I saw the head of a notorious poisoner by the name of Margretha Gottfried. I suppose you have all heard of her?"

The question was answered in the affirmative by most of her auditors, and they descanted upon the noteworthy features in the career of the criminal.

"When I travelled through Central Sweden two years ago," resumed Nathalie, "I heard of a strange and sad event that transpired about twenty years ago. It was of so tragic a nature, that I never hear of a case of poisoning without thinking of it."

"Then it was a story of that kind?" said one of those in the circle.

"Yes, in a certain sense." Nathalie now raised her eyes and fastened them upon Lothard, who still stood leaning against Skuldfrið's chair and was consequently opposite the Countess. There was something in the expression of her face which gave Lothard the feeling that

she was about to say something disagreeable. Nathalie continued, —

"In that region there is said to have been a judge, young and much thought of, who, after bearing his office with honor for several years, shot himself."

"And the reason?" asked one of her listeners.

"It was a very sad one." Nathalie's eyes now turned from Lothard to Skuldfrið. "It was discovered that the judge's wife, left a widow through the death of his brother, had poisoned her first husband, and —"

"Baroness Canitz," was announced. Nathalie ceased abruptly. Lothard started; and Skuldfrið, who at Nathalie's last words had become deadly pale, cast a frightened glance at Lothard.

"Baroness Canitz, who is she?" was asked in a whisper. All looks were directed towards the door with intense interest. The Professor hastened to meet the new-comer, followed by Aunt Sara, who had been obliged to use her handkerchief several times in order to preserve her composure and keep from crying.

The Professor brought in an elderly lady of stately appearance, whose face yet bore traces of beauty; her large dark eyes shed a singular expression over her features, which spoke of a life full of deep and bitter suffering.

"My cousin, Baroness Canitz," said the Professor in introduction. "The mother of Baron Canitz and also of my foster-son Tage Aberney, whom she kindly intrusted to me to bring up as my own son."

The surprise was general; even Tage and Lothard were astonished. Their mother's appearance was something for which they were totally unprepared. Lothard and Skuldfrið went up to the Baroness.

"My betrothed," said Lothard. His voice was full of emotion and his eyes rested tenderly upon his mother.

The Baroness embraced Skuldfrid and whispered, —

“God bless you, my daughter!”

Tage had remained quietly at one of the windows. The Baroness’s glance, however, went immediately in quest of her youngest son. Perhaps Tage caught it, or perhaps there was something within him that whispered what he ought to do. After a moment’s hesitation, he also approached his mother. Lothard drew back and Skuldfrid turned away. Tage was agitated. This was the second time that he stood before the one he had to thank for life. He was unable to utter a word, so overwhelmed was he by a thousand conflicting feelings. He seized her hand and carried it to his lips. When he again raised his bowed head, the Baroness embraced him, whispering, —

“God bless you, my best beloved child!” The words were not heard by any, save the one to whom they were addressed.

When the company had recovered from the first surprise the conversation resumed its course. Aunt Sara, the Baroness, and Skuldfrid were talking together. Nathalie sat leaning back in her chair, listening with an abstracted air to what Lieutenant Steen and a lady were saying. The conversation was not especially lively. The Professor took a seat beside the Countess.

“You were interrupted, my dear Countess, in the midst of your story about the young judge,” said Aberney, politely. “It is a pity, for I presume that the account had a psychologic value, like the majority of criminal cases.”

At these words of Aberney’s, Skuldfrid turned her head hastily, as if she would have asked him by this motion what he was thinking of when he brought the conversation back to this subject. Whether the Professor noticed this motion or not is uncertain; for he went right on, —

“Do you know the name of the judge?”

“I have heard, but forgotten it,” replied Nathalie, with a peculiar emphasis.

“Indeed. Then I am more fortunate, for the unhappy man who shot himself was — *my brother*, Madame Dorbino’s *father*, and Baroness Edith Canitz’s brother-in-law.”

Nathalie became crimson.

“The poor widow, of whom you said that she shortened her first husband’s days, was, like Baroness Canitz, my cousin. Her first husband was also a brother of mine. You ought to perceive from this that I know the causes of the death of both my brothers better than any other. I can therefore declare, quite boldly, that every charge against my late sister-in-law, of having been instrumental in the decease of either of her husbands, is false. It is a little daring to assume that a person is guilty whom the law has left untouched. In so doing one always runs the risk of repeating an untrue report.”

Nathalie felt humiliated, but answered with her most childish smile, —

“You are right, Professor, and therefore I always forget the names of the persons who play any rôle in the occurrences I relate. This has the advantage of never compromising any one.”

“A charming habit, as all yours are.”

“The old fox,” thought Nathalie. “You apply flattery, so that I shall not perceive that you have intended to hit me.”

The company took supper and at last broke up.

The morning came again with life and activity. Aunt Sara had risen early to put things in order after the party. She was just engaged in counting over the glass and china, when the Professor’s man Andreas entered, —

“Why, Mamsell, are you up already?” said Andreas. “Have you heard of the accident?”

"What accident?" asked Sara.

"The accident to — to — Madame Dorbino."

"What in God's name has happened to her?"

"The horses ran away, carrying the coachman and her right into the stream. The man who waited on the company last night came here just now and told me all about it. Good Lord, how pale you look!"

"Victor, Victor," shrieked Sara, clasping her head in despair, — "Victor, Victor." The Professor's door flew open and he appeared on the threshold wrapped in his dressing-gown.

"What is the matter?" asked he.

Sara sprang towards him and exclaimed in an agonized voice, —

"Skuldfrid has been run away with and killed." Then she fell senseless to the floor.

When Lothard's servant came in to him in the morning he said, —

"Herr Baron, an accident happened last evening."

"What was it?" asked Lothard.

"I do not know how I shall dare to speak of it, but you will —"

The man was here interrupted by some one who violently threw open the door of the saloon; Lieutenant Steen entered Lothard's cabinet precipitately, exclaiming in an agitated voice, —

"Canitz, what a terrible occurrence, and that upon the very day of your betrothal!"

Lothard sprang to his feet.

"Of what occurrence do you speak?"

"Of the accident that has befallen your betrothed."

"Skuldfrid!"

"Yes, the horses have run away with her and —"

Lothard started to the door to rush out; but Steen seized him by the arm, saying, —

"Where are you going, my poor friend?"

"To her —"

"Canitz, summon all your courage, and listen to me. She as well as the carriage and horses have been thrown into the stream."

"It is not true, it cannot be so," exclaimed Lothard in despair. He seized his hat and rushed down the stairs. In a few moments Skuldfrid's door-bell rang violently. Anaise opened the door. It was Lothard, who with pale and quivering lips inquired, —

"Is Madame at home?"

"No, she did not come home last night," was the answer.

"Where then is she?"

"I do not know; we have expected her all night; perhaps she is at the Professor's."

Lothard hurried away. A moment after he rushed into Aberney's saloon, where he almost ran over the Professor, who was just going out.

"Skuldfrid!" faltered Lothard with despair in tone and look. The first glance at Aberney's face was a sufficient answer to his question.

Tage was not to be seen.

We now leave those so terribly afflicted, and will see what transpired at Nathalie's, after her return home from the betrothal.

When the Countess entered her boudoir, she took a step back and gave a faint cry of fright. In the dim light of the summer evening she distinguished a man's form, which sat leaning back on the sofa.

"Light!" cried the Countess.

Her maid hurried in with one. The figure now rose. The light fell on his face, and Nathalie stammered, quite amazed, —

"Lieutenant Aberney, you here?"

"Yes, as you see, Countess." The

maid placed the light on the table and left the room immediately.

"How came you here, and what is the reason that you expose me in this way?" asked Nathalie.

"The reason is that I must speak with you to-night, just now. What I have to say will not bear any listening ears, therefore permit me to close the door."

"But, sir, consider what you do!" exclaimed Nathalie; "what will the servants think?"

"What they please. I must speak to you in private."

"Have you failed, that you are here?" "No."

"But, good God, if our plan has not been frustrated, I do not understand —"

"Why I should be here. Be so kind as to take a seat, Countess, and try to listen to me with calmness." He compelled Nathalie to be seated.

"The plan devised by you and the Doctor was this: the Doctor was to take the coachman's place on Skuldfrið's carriage, and instead of driving her to your house, he should set off for Rosenvik, where I was to be waiting for her. The idea was ingenious and well contrived; for not a being could be found on earth who in the morning would not have regarded Skuldfrið as a faithless and dishonored woman, who for the sake of becoming Baroness Canitz had sacrificed her childhood's fancy, but had yet maintained a criminal connection with the friend of her youth. If Lothard Canitz had loved her ten times as much as he does, this occurrence would still have separated him from Skuldfrið forever. All her vows and protestations could not have cleared her from the degrading stain which had been cast upon her honor. It only remained for her to give me her hand and in this way silence the scandal. The Polish physician had well calculated the results of his arrangement, one of which would probably have been

that Lothard would have sent a bullet through his own head."

"What are you driving at with all this?" Nathalie rubbed her handkerchief impatiently between her hands.

"You shall learn directly. When you and the Doctor initiated me into this plan, you had no idea that Lothard and I were brothers, otherwise you would have realized that a brother, however malevolent he may be, could not be guilty of such perfidy."

"But, sir, you acted as though you eagerly embraced our plan, the only object of which was to fulfil your desires," rejoined Nathalie hastily.

"True; but if I had not done so, the Doctor would have invented some other plot, from which I could not have saved Skuldfrið, being ignorant of it."

"Then you have warned her?" The Countess sprang up.

"No, I have done that which is better; I have placed her where she is secure from all persecutions, until you and I fully understand each other."

"I think I have understood you sufficiently," said Nathalie, attempting to leave the room.

"Stay, Nathalie," said Tage in a decided voice, seizing her arm, "you have not heard me to the end." He looked at his watch. "Wagner has not yet reached Rosenvik with the empty carriage. Before he discovers that he has only amused himself with a pleasure trip, you will have perceived that I have saved you and myself from committing a base act. You will thank me for it."

"I doubt it." Nathalie reseated herself.

"Have you not a thousand times declared and also repeated in writing that it was my happiness you wished to further?"

"True," replied Nathalie. She realized with dismay that she was completely in Tage's power, that the game was lost, and that he could compromise her in a terri-

